

The
Apostolic Church

—
Scriptural Baptism

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Wetherow

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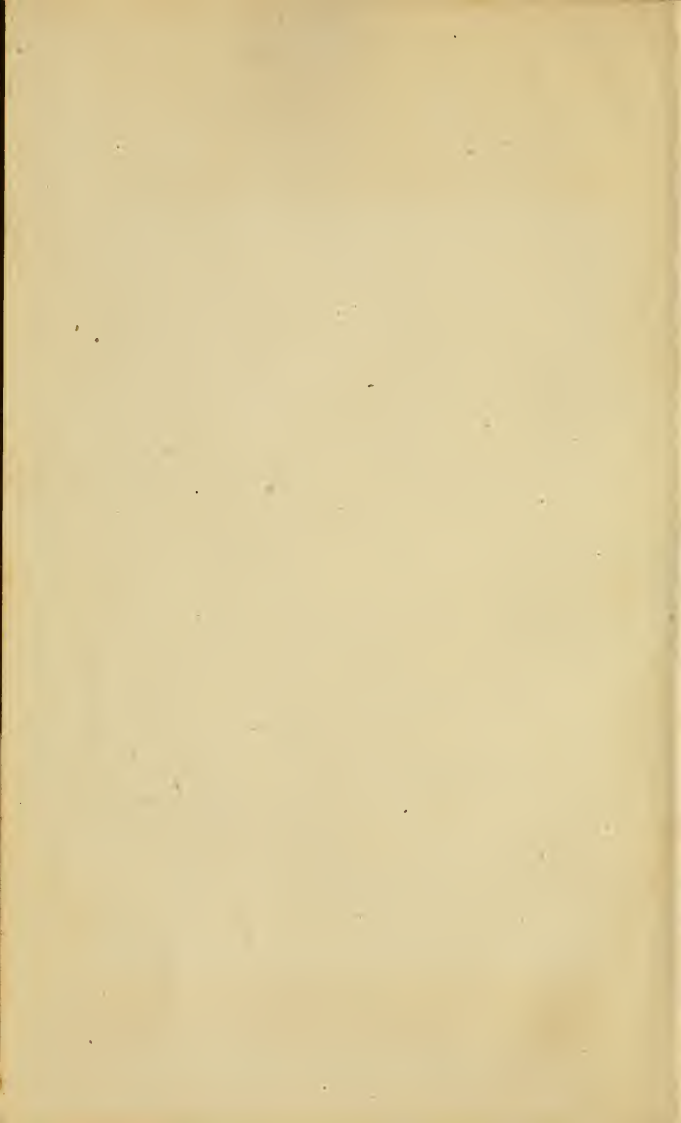
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THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH



PROF. WITHEROW

Samuel A. New Esq
From H. Green D
John Caldwell
Philadelphia
Oct 1st 1877

A large, elegant, sweeping decorative flourish that starts from the bottom left and curves across the bottom of the page.



The Apostolic Church

WHICH IS IT?

AN INQUIRY

AT THE ORACLES OF GOD AS TO WHETHER
ANY EXISTING FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT IS
OF DIVINE RIGHT

BY

THOMAS WITHEROW

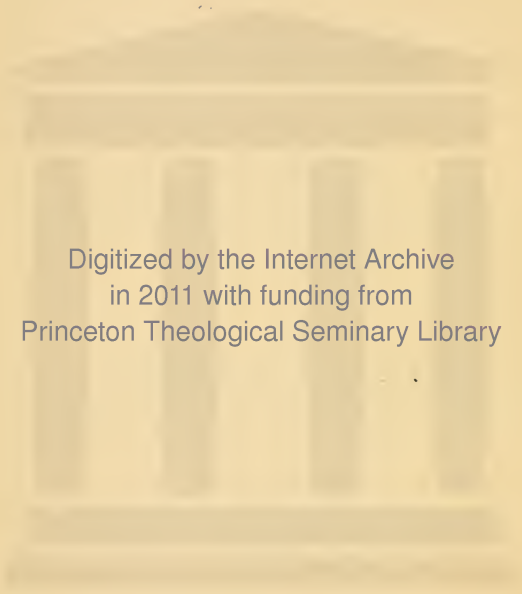
PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY, LONDONDERRY

"If a Divine plan of Church Government be extremely necessary, by what authority does any man reject the apostolical?"—*Dr. Carson*

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PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

SINCE the last edition of this little Treatise was published in Ireland, an authorized abridgement, which omitted various passages and the whole of Chapter IV., was published in London, and was widely circulated in England. This abridgement was entitled "An Inquiry into the Scriptural Form of Church Government," and was specially adapted for English readers.

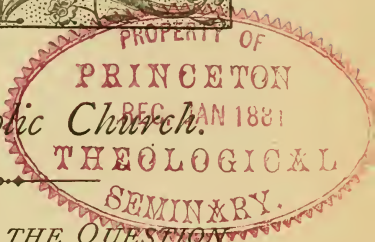
The present edition is unabridged. The local allusions are understood in Ireland, and the sentiments of Chapter IV. are as applicable to our circumstances at present as they were in 1856. In view of it being stereotyped, the whole work has been again revised, and has received some alterations at the hand of the Author. He ventures to cherish the hope that, in this its permanent form, it may still continue to be of some service to the Truth.

Some Ministers have already used it as a text-book in the Bible class, and in the higher forms of the Sabbath-school, the Author trusts not without profit.

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The Apostolic Church.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

IT is very common for professing Christians to draw a distinction between *essentials* and *non-essentials* in religion, and to infer that, if any fact or doctrine rightly belongs to the latter class, it must be a matter of very little importance, and may in practice be safely set at nought. The great bulk of men take their opinions on trust; they will not undergo the toil of thinking, searching, and reasoning about anything, and one of the most usual expedients adopted to save them the trouble of inquiry, and to turn aside the force of any disagreeable fact, is to meet it by saying, "The matter is not essential to salvation; therefore we need give ourselves little concern on the subject."

If the distinction here specified is safe, the inference drawn from it is certainly dangerous. To say that, because a fact of Divine revelation is not essential to salvation, it must of necessity be unimportant, and may or may not be received by us, is to assert a principle, the application of which would make havoc of our Christianity. For, what are the truths essential to salvation? Are they not these:—That there is a God; that all men are sinners; that the Son of God died upon the cross to make atonement for the guilty; and that whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved?

There is good reason for believing that not a few souls are now in happiness, who in life knew little more than these—the first principles of the oracles of God—the very alphabet of the Christian system ; and if so, no other Divine truths can be counted absolutely essential to salvation. But if all the other truths of revelation are unimportant, because they happen to be non-essentials, it follows that the Word of God itself is in the main unimportant ; for by far the greatest portion of it is occupied with matters, the knowledge of which, in the case supposed, is not absolutely indispensable to the everlasting happiness of men. Nor does it alter the case, if we regard the number of fundamental truths to be much greater. Let a man once persuade himself that importance attaches only to what he is pleased to call essentials, whatever their number, and he will, no doubt, shorten his creed and cut away the foundation of many controversies ; but he will practically set aside all except a very small part of the Scriptures. If such a principle does not mutilate the Bible, it stigmatises much of it as trivial. Revelation is all gold for preciousness and purity, but the very touch of such a principle would transmute the most of it into dross.

Though every statement in the Scripture cannot be regarded as absolutely essential to salvation, yet everything there is essential to some other wise and important end, else it would not find a place in the good Word of God. Human wisdom may be baffled in attempting to specify the design of every truth that forms a component part of Divine revelation, but eternity will show us that no portion of it is useless. All Scripture is profitable. A fact written therein may not be essential to human salvation, and yet it may be highly conducive to some other great and gracious purpose in the economy of God—it may be necessary for our personal comfort, for our guidance in life, or for our growth in holiness, and most certainly it is essential to the completeness of the system of Divine truth. The law of the Lord is perfect. Strike out of the Bible the truth that seems the most insignificant of all, and the law of the Lord would not be perfect any more. In architecture, the pinning that fills a crevice in the wall occupies a subordinate position, in comparison with the quoin ;

but the builder lets us know that the one has an important purpose to serve as well as the other, and does its part to promote the stability and completeness of the house. In ship-building, the screws and bolts that gird the ship together are insignificant, as compared with the beams of oak and masts of pine, but they contribute their full share to the safety of the vessel and the security of the passenger. So in the Christian system, every fact, great or small, that God has been pleased to insert in the Bible, is, by its very position, invested with importance, answers its end, and, though perhaps justly considered as non-essential to salvation, does not deserve to be accounted as worthless.

Every Divine truth is important, though it may be that all Divine truths are not of equal importance. The simplest statement of the Bible is a matter of more concern to an immortal being than the most sublime sentiment of mere human genius. The one carries with it what the other cannot show—the stamp of the approval of God. The one comes to us from heaven, the other savours of the earth. The one has for us a special interest, as forming a constituent portion of that Word which is a message from God to each individual man; the other is the production of a mind merely human, to which we and all our interests were alike unknown. Any truth merely human should weigh with us light as a feather in comparison with the most insignificant of the truths of God. The faith of a Christian should strive to reach and grasp everything that God has honoured with a place in that Word, the design of which is to be a light to our feet as we thread our way through this dark world. Besides, this, unlike every other book, is not doomed to perish. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the words of Christ shall not pass away. The seal of eternity is stamped on every verse of the Bible. This fact is enough of itself to make every line of it important.

With these observations we deem it right to introduce our exposition of ecclesiastical polity. Few would go so far as to assert that correct views on Church Government are essential to salvation, and yet it is a subject whose importance it were folly to attempt to depreciate. The Holy Spirit,

speaking in the Scriptures, treats of this theme. The Christian world has been divided in opinion about it ever since the Reformation. We cannot attach ourselves to any denomination of Christians without giving our influence either to truth or error on this very point ; and the views we adopt upon this subject go far to colour our opinions on matters of Christian faith and practice. With such facts before us, though we may not regard the polity of the New Testament Church as essential to human salvation, we do not feel at liberty to undervalue its importance.

The various forms of Church Government that we find existing at present in the Christian world, may be classed under some one or other of these three heads :—PRELACY, INDEPENDENCY, and PRESBYTERY. We do not employ these terms in an offensive sense, but as being the best calculated to denote their respective systems. *Prelacy* is that form of Church Government which is administered by archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical office-bearers depending on that hierarchy ; and is such as we see exemplified in the Greek Church, the Church of Rome, and the Church of England. *Independency* is that form of Church Government whose distinctive principle is, that each separate congregation is under Christ subject to no external jurisdiction whatever, but has within itself—in its office-bearers and members—all the materials of government ; and is such as is at present in practical operation among Congregationalists and Baptists. *Presbytery* is that form of Church Government which is dispensed by presbyters or elders, met in Session, Presbytery, Synod, or General Assembly ; and is such as is presented in the several Presbyterian Churches of Ireland, Scotland, England, and America. These three forms of ecclesiastical polity are at this moment extensively prevalent in Christendom. Indeed, every other organization, that any considerable body of Christians has adopted, is only a modification or a mixture of some of the systems we have named.

A very brief examination enables us to see that these three systems differ very widely in their characteristic features. Not only so, but Prelacy, in all its main principles, is opposed to Presbytery ; and Independency, in its main principles, is

opposed to both. It follows that three forms, differing so very much, cannot all be right, and cannot of course have equal claims on the attachment and support of enlightened and conscientious men. It is self-evident, moreover, that the Word of God, the only rule of faith and practice, cannot approve of all ; for, as the Word of God never contradicts itself, it cannot sanction contradictory systems. Some one of the three must be more in accordance with the will of God, as expressed in the Scriptures, than either of the others ; and to know which of them is so, should be a subject of deep interest to every child of God. A Christian, of all men, is bound to be a lover of the truth ; and we are warranted in supposing that, if a Christian could only see to which of these competing systems the Word of Truth bears witness, he would support it with all his might, and would lend no encouragement to the others. If a man, after he sees the difference, can hold what he knows to be merely human in the same estimation with what he knows to be Divine, let him bid farewell to his Christianity, and cease to pretend that he cherishes any attachment to the truth. The religion of the Lord Jesus, except we mistake its spirit far, binds all who receive it to prefer the true to the false, the right to the wrong, the good to the evil ; and for us to be tempted by any consideration to hold them in equal reverence and render them equal support, is to fling one of the first requirements of Christianity away from us. The influence of a Christian is often very little in this world, but whatever it is, it is a talent, for which, like his time, his money, or his intellectual power, he is accountable to God, and that influence ought ever to be on the side of the truth, never against the truth.

Which, then, of the three forms of Church Government prevalent throughout the world is it the duty of a Christian to select and to support ?

This is a question of great importance. It is, besides, forced upon our consideration in every locality where a dissenting chapel lifts its front, and a church steeple tapers into air. And yet it must be admitted, that the majority of Christians contrive to pass through life without ever giving an hour's thought to this most interesting theme. Most

people are content to let their ancestors choose a church for them, and every Sabbath walk to Divine worship in the footsteps of their great-grandfathers—they know not why, and care not wherefore. Some shrink from inquiry, lest it should turn out that the Church to which they are bound by ties of family, education, and habit, is destitute of all Scriptural authority, and lest they feel uncomfortable by having their convictions and their interests set at war. But the great reason why the spirit of inquiry is almost dead on this subject is, that the pulpit is silent, or nearly so, on ecclesiastical government. On this topic the trumpet gives not an uncertain sound, but commonly no sound whatever. There are, we are persuaded, few ministers in any denomination who could say to their people that, on this subject, “we have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” The people never having had their attention specially directed to those passages of Scripture where the principles of Church Government are embodied, give no time or thought to the consideration of the subject. The result is, that vast masses of men and women live in utter ignorance, not only of the Scriptural facts bearing on the case, but even of their own denominational peculiarities; they are Prelatists, Independents, or Presbyterians by birth, not by conviction; they view all forms of Church Government as equally true, which is the same thing as to count them equally worthless; they have no definite ideas on the subject; and thus, in absence of public instruction, they are, by the education of circumstances, prepared to fall in with any system or no system, as may best suit their private convenience or promote their worldly ambition. So it is that many who, in the judgment of charity, are Christians, regard the denomination with which birth or accident has connected them, either with a blind attachment or a sinful indifference; and, though rival systems of Church polity have their representatives in every village, they plod the weary way of life in happy unconcern about all such matters, and are never troubled with the question that the very sight of a church spire suggests to other men—*Which of these is true?*

Most people who withdraw from the communion of one Church to connect themselves with another, and thus exercise

their right of choice between the various forms of ecclesiastical government, are induced to give their preference from motives such as should never influence an intelligent Christian. They are guided by feeling rather than by judgment. They do not first ascertain the leading principles of the denomination from its acknowledged standards, and then examine these principles in the light of the Word of God. The bulk of mankind are not intellectual enough to search for principles and weigh them. At least, they do not take the trouble, but are influenced in their choice, either by the authority of some great man, or the moral worth of some particular persons, or the piety and eloquence of some local minister—or perhaps by paltry pique, or petty gain, or love of the rank or fashion of the world, or by some other equally low and vulgar consideration. But to decide the rival claims of Prelacy, Independency, and Presbytery by any such tests as these, is absurd in the extreme. Try them by the authority of great men ! There is not one of the three systems that could not present a long catalogue of distinguished men, who were its warm supporters till the last hour of life. Test them by moral worth ! There is not one of them that could not present a goodly number of the excellent of the earth, waiting on its ministrations and reposing beneath its shadow. If we ask which of these systems provides able and pious ministers to instruct the people, we find a large number of such persons filling the pulpits of each of them ; and if we examine farther, we will find that not unfrequently there may be in the same town a minister who is an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, who, all the week in the garden of the Lord, is active as the busy bee, and who, when Sabbath comes, dispenses the sweets of the Divine Word to admiring multitudes ; while, in connexion with the same denomination, there may be on the other side of the street some poor pitiful drone, who is doomed to hum to vacancy all the year round. Any such modes of testing ecclesiastical systems, however common, are unsure and unsafe.

To us it seems there is a much more satisfactory way of deciding upon the claims of those forms of Church Government which obtain at present in the world—that is, to test

their peculiar principles by the standard of the Word of God. That book is quite sufficient to point out the path of duty to the Christian in this as well as in all other matters, for it was intended by its Divine Author to be our guide in matters of practice as well as of faith. The Bible furnishes us with peculiar facilities for forming an opinion on this very point. It tells us of a Church that was organized in the world eighteen hundred years ago. The founders of that Church were apostles and prophets, acting by the authority of God. Every fact known with certainty about the original constitution of the Church is preserved in the Bible, everything preserved elsewhere is only hearsay and tradition. We read in Scripture very many facts that enable us to know with tolerable accuracy the history, doctrine, worship, and government of that Church which existed in apostolic days. The principles of government set up in a Church which was founded by inspired men, must have had, we are sure, the approbation of God. Corruptions in government, as well as in doctrine, sprang up at a very early period, but the Church in apostolic days was purer than it ever has been in subsequent times. The most obvious method, therefore, of arriving at the truth is to compare our modern systems of ecclesiastical government with the model presented in the Holy Scriptures. That which bears the closest resemblance to the Divine original is most likely itself to be Divine.

The warmest friends of existing ecclesiastical systems cannot fairly object to such a test. There is scarcely a Church on earth that is not loud in its pretensions to apostolicity. The Prelatic Churches claim to be apostolic. The Independent Churches claim to be apostolic. The Presbyterian Churches claim to be apostolic. Each of these denominations professes to maintain the same doctrine, worship, and government that distinguished the Church which was planted by the apostles of the Lord. On one of these points—that of ecclesiastical government—we propose to examine these claims by the very test that themselves have chosen. Divesting ourselves of all prejudice, we come to the law and to the testimony, desirous to know what God says on the topic in question, and determined to follow where the Scripture

points, let that be where it may. Let us search the Bible, to see what it teaches on this great theme. If, on a thorough examination, we fail to discover there any clear and definite principles of Church Government, the conclusion of necessity follows, that Prelacy, Independency, and Presbytery are upon a level—none of them is based upon Divine authority—and it becomes a matter of mere expediency or convenience which form we support. If we find, on the other hand, that certain great principles of Church Government are embodied in the Scriptures, then, when we have ascertained accurately what these principles are, we have reached the mind of God upon the matter, and we have discovered a touch-stone, wherewith we can try the value of existing systems, and determine how much is human and how much Divine in every one of them.



Meaning of the Word Church.

The word *Church* in our common discourse is used in a variety of senses. Sometimes it signifies the material building erected for Divine worship; sometimes it means the people usually assembling in such a building; sometimes the aggregate body of the clergy as distinguished from the laity; sometimes the collective body of professing Christians. As general use is the law of language, it does not become us to take exception to the variety of significations that are given to the term by our best writers; nor can we even say that much practical inconvenience arises from them, inasmuch as the accompanying circumstances usually determine the specific sense in which the word is to be understood. But it is never to be forgotten that, when we come to the interpretation of the word of God, the variety of senses commonly attached to the term is altogether inadmissible, and would, if adopted, darken and corrupt the meaning of Divine revelation. The word *Church* in Scripture has always one meaning, and one only—*an assembly of the people of God—a society of Christians*. The Greek word *ecclesia*, in its primary and civil sense, means any assembly called together for any pur-

pose (Acts xix. 32); but in its appropriated and religious sense, it means a *society of Christians*, and is invariably translated by the word *Church*. Examine the Scriptures from the commencement to the close, and you find that the word *Church* never has any other meaning but that which we have stated. Let any man who feels disposed to dispute this statement, produce, if he can, any passage from the Word of God where the sense would be impaired, if the phrase *society of Christians*, or *Christian assembly* were substituted for the word *Church*. This, we are persuaded, would be impossible.

Though the meaning of the word *Church* is in Scripture always the same, let it be observed that its applications are various. It is applied, at the pleasure of the writer, to any society of Christians, however great, or however small. Examples of this fact will not fail to suggest themselves to all who are familiar with the Word of God. We give a few passages as specimens:—

Col. iv. 15.—“Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church which is in his house.” There the term is applied to a *society of Christians* so small as to be able to find accommodation in a private dwelling-house.

Acts xi. 22.—“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem.” There it means a *society of Christians* residing in the same city, and including, as we know on excellent authority, several thousand persons.

Acts vii. 38.—“This is he (Moses) that was in the Church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.” Here the word signifies a *society of Christians*—an assembly of God’s people so large as to include a whole nation, consisting at the time of at least two millions in number. The term is also applied to the people of God in the days of David, when residing in Canaan, spread over a great extent of territory, and amounting to many millions. Heb. ii. 12, compared with Psalm xxii. 22—25.

I Cor. xii. 28.—“And God hath set some in the Church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, govern-

ments, diversities of tongues." Here the term means the *society of Christians* residing on earth ; for it was among them, not among the saints in glory, that God raised up men endowed with apostolic and prophetic gifts.

Eph. v. 25.—“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.” The word is here used to signify the *society of Christians* in the largest sense—all for whom Christ died—the whole family of God—all saints in heaven and all believers on earth, viewed as one great company.

Let it be observed, however, that, amid all this variety of application, the word Church never alters its sense. Its meaning in every occurrence is the same. However applied, it never ceases to signify a *society of Christians* ; but whether the society that the inspired writer has in view is great or small, general or particular, is to be learned, not from the term, but from the circumstances in which the term is used. In every instance it is from the context, never from the word itself, that we are to gather whether the society of Christians, intended by the writer, is to be understood of the collective company of God's people in heaven and earth, or only of those on the earth, in a nation, in a city, or in a private house. The practice—into which the best expositors of Scripture are occasionally betrayed—of taking up some idea conveyed by the context only, and regarding that idea as entering into the meaning of some particular word, has been shown by a late eminent critic to be the origin of those numerous significations—perplexing by their very multitude—appended almost to every word in our classical dictionaries, and the prolific source of errors in the interpretation of the Word of God. This is obviously what has led many to suppose that the word Church has two meanings—signifying something different when referring to the universal body of believers, from what it does when denoting the body of believers connected with a particular locality. The truth is, that the word Church has only one meaning, but it has a variety of applications. The term of itself never conveys any idea but a society of Christians ; it is the context that invariably determines its general or particular application. It is manifestly inaccurate,

therefore, to maintain that an idea, invariably conveyed by the context, enters into the meaning of the term ; when, as all must admit, the term, apart from the context, does not suggest either a limited or universal application.

Had we occasion to speak of the several Christian congregations of a province or nation in their separate capacity, it would be quite in accordance with the Scriptural idiom to designate them the *Churches* of that region. None can forget how frequently the Apostle speaks of the Churches of Syria and Achaia, Galatia and Asia. So, if we required to speak of the individual congregations of Christians in Ireland—the separate Christian societies scattered over the country—we might denominate them the Churches of Ireland, there being nothing in existing ecclesiastical usages to make such language either unintelligible or liable to be misunderstood. But it deserves to be noticed that, when we use such phrases as the “Established Church of Scotland,” the “Episcopal Church of America,” or the “Presbyterian Church of Ireland,” there is no departure whatever from the Scriptural sense of the word. The meaning of the word in Scripture, as we have seen, invariably is a society of Christians, and this is precisely its meaning in any of the above phrases ; the context, at the same time, limiting the Christians in question to those professing certain principles, and belonging to a particular country. When we employ, for instance, such a designation as the *Presbyterian Church of Ireland*, the word Church is used precisely in the Scriptural sense to denote a society of Christians, which we learn from the context professes Presbyterian principles and resides in Ireland.

The propriety of applying the term to signify the Christian people of a country, does not arise from the fact that they are ever assembled in one congregation, either personally or by representatives, but from the fact that the mind contemplates them as a collective body. All saints in heaven and believers on earth are styled the *Church*, not because they are assembled either literally or figuratively, but because, in the view of the mind, they are regarded as a great society, separated from the world, and united by common principles into one great brotherhood. And so the Christians of any denomina-

tion, though composing a multitude of congregations, may, in their aggregate capacity, be properly styled a Church, not because they are either figuratively or literally assembled, but because, in the view of the mind, they are regarded as a collective body, distinguished from others, and united among themselves, by the profession of a common creed.

It was once doubted whether the Scriptures contain an example of the word Church being applied to the Christians of a *country*. The science of Biblical Criticism has now set that question at rest in all time coming. The true reading of Acts ix. 31, is, "Then had the *Church* rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, *was* multiplied." No man, with the slightest pretensions to scholarship, can now hesitate about receiving this as the original form of the text, when it is known that the lately discovered MS.—the *Codex Sinaiticus*—is in its favour, no less than A B C; these four being at once the most ancient and valuable manuscripts of the New Testament now extant. Not to speak of the evidence derivable from versions and Fathers, the united voice of these four MSS. is enough to settle the correct form of any text: their testimony as to the original reading of Acts ix. 31 none can question; and to that passage we confidently point as a clear instance of the word *Church* being applied to the Christians of a country, viewed as one collective society, though in reality divided into many separate congregations.

Some writers, indeed, give a different account of the matter. They tell us that the universal community of Christians in heaven and on earth is called in Scripture the *Church*, not because they are viewed as one great brotherhood, united by common principles, but because they "are at all times truly and properly assembled in Jesus." It is a mere fancy to suppose that the mind ever takes such a fact into account, when employing the term in its universal application; but, if so, it does not alter the case. The Christians of a particular district, or of a province, or of a nation, may be properly designated a Church for the same reasons; because they also "are at all times truly and properly assembled in

Jesus." There is no sense in which all the Christians on earth and in heaven are "assembled in Jesus," that the Christians of any particular country are not thus assembled. If the whole is assembled, so also are the parts. Take the matter either way, the Christians of a district, or a province, or a kingdom, holding certain principles in common, if viewed as a collective community, are a Church, exactly in the sense of the Scriptures. They are a SOCIETY OF CHRISTIANS.



Government of the Church.

The Christian society on earth, or, as it is usually called, the Church, is represented in the Scriptures as a *kingdom*. It was of his Church that the Lord Jesus spake, when He said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36). The fact of its being a kingdom necessarily implies at least three things—first, a *king* or governor; secondly, *subjects*; thirdly, *laws*. In the Church or kingdom of God, the king is *Christ*; the subjects are *believers*; the laws are the *Scriptures* of truth.

Every king has officers under him, who are charged with the execution of his laws, and who have authority from the crown to do justice and judgment. Judges and magistrates are the office-bearers of a kingdom, deriving their power from the monarch under whom they serve, and putting the laws in force among all ranks and classes of the people. Hence a very palpable division of a kingdom is into *rulers* and *ruled*—those whose duty is to administer the law, and those who are bound to obey it. The same distinction holds in the kingdom of Christ. It also consists of rulers and ruled—the office-bearers entrusted with the dispensation of the laws, and the people who are commanded to yield them submission. This is very plain, from Heb. xiii. 17—"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." It is clear from this passage that there are some in the Church whose duty is to rule; they are the office-bearers of the Church. It is no less clear that there are others in the

Church, whose duty is to obey ; they are the private members—the subjects of the kingdom—the people.

But in every society where it is the acknowledged duty of some parties to exercise authority, and of others to practise submission, there must be what is called *government*; for in such authority exercised on the one hand, and in such submission rendered on the other, the essence of all government consists. Even was there no passage in the Scriptures but that last quoted, bearing upon the subject, it is undeniable that government was established in the Apostolic Church. If government existed, some *form* of government must have been adopted; for to say that there was established in the kingdom of Christ government without a form of government is absurd. History tells us of many ecclesiastical and political wonders, but of all the strange things that have been witnessed in the world or in the Church, since the beginning of time, there has never yet appeared government without a form of government. The thing is impossible. Government in itself is an abstraction. The moment it puts forth power, it becomes a reality—it stands before the world as a visible thing—it assumes a form.

That there was government in the Apostolic Church, and that this government existed under a certain form, seems clear to demonstration. To determine with precision what this form was, is a matter of great consequence; for it must be evident to all that a plan of Church government, instituted by the apostles of the Lord, acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, must carry with it a degree of lawfulness and authority that no human system, though in itself a masterpiece of wisdom—made venerable by age, or recommended by expediency—ever can exhibit; and that every existing form of Church government is deserving of respect only so far as it conforms in its principles to that Divine original. But there are obvious reasons that make it a matter of some difficulty to ascertain with accuracy the system of ecclesiastical polity that was established in the New Testament Church.

1. The Apostles, writing to Christians who were themselves members of the Apostolic Church, and of course well acquainted with its organization, did not judge it necessary

to enter into detailed descriptions of the Christian society. To do so would have been unnatural. They do occasionally state facts bearing on Church government, and hint indirectly at prevailing practices. These hints and facts were sufficiently suggestive and intelligible to the persons originally addressed, but by us, who live in a distant age, in a foreign country, and among associations widely different, they are not so easily understood.

2. They do not even arrange such facts as bear upon the question in systematic order. If man had had the making of the Bible, it would have been a very different book ; but as that circumstance was not left to our option, we must take it as we find it. On examination, we see that it teaches nothing in scientific order. Even morality and doctrine are not there arranged in regular system, but are conveyed in detached portions, and our industry is stimulated by having to gather the scattered fragments, to compare them with each other, and to work them up into order for ourselves. So ecclesiastical polity is not taught in Scripture methodically ; but away over the wide field of revelation, facts and hints and circumstances lie scattered, which we are to search for, and examine, and combine, and classify. Now, all do not agree in the arrangement of these facts, nor in the inferences that legitimately flow from them, nor in the mode of constructing a system from the detached material.

These things make it difficult to ascertain with accuracy, and still more so with unanimity, the form of Church government that existed in Apostolic days. But difficult as it seems, it is proved quite possible, by a thorough and unprejudiced examination of the Scriptures, to discover the main principles that entered into the constitution of the primitive Church. We say the *main principles*—more than these we need not expect to find. The Word of God, except in some rare instances, never enters into details—it states principles. This is a very noticeable peculiarity of the Divine legislation, that deserves a passing remark. In every civilised country, it may be observed how those entrusted with the duty of government aim to provide a law for every specific case. The human legislator descends to details. The result of

this in our own country is, that the common and statute laws of England are so bulky that the books in which they are written would make of themselves a magnificent library ; Parliament meets every year for the express purpose of constructing new, and amending old laws, to suit the ever varying circumstances of the country and the times ; and notwithstanding all, cases occur daily in the public courts, wherein the most accomplished jurists have to acknowledge that the existing laws determine nothing. But observe how the Divine law proceeds on a method quite different. It rarely enters into specific details, but lays down general principles, any one of which is quite sufficient to decide a whole multitude of cases. Instead, for instance, of attempting to prescribe every form of good that it is right for a man to perform to his neighbour, it lays down a principle quite sufficient to meet every case—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Instead of enumerating the different ways by which children are to discharge the duties that they owe their parents, Scripture enacts this general law, holding good in every case—Honour thy father and thy mother. Declining to specify every semblance of sin that it were well for Christians to avoid, the statutes of the Lord direct us to—Abstain from all appearance of evil. Human legislation enters into minute details, but Divine legislation enacts general principles. The result is that, while there is perhaps more room left for difference of opinion in the interpretation and application of the enactments of a code of law constructed on the latter system, yet this disadvantage is more than counterbalanced by the fact, that the laws of God are in themselves perfect ; that they do not change with the ever varying circumstances of countries and of times ; that they meet every case which can possibly occur ; and that they are compressed into a reasonable size, being all written in a book so small that it can be lifted in the hand, or carried in the pocket. Now, the Scripture teaches us Church government, as it teaches morality. It does not furnish minute details, but it supplies THE GREAT LEADING PRINCIPLES that entered into the polity of the Apostolic Church.

What these main principles were, it is now our purpose to ascertain.*

It is the common practice of writers, in discussing the important subject of ecclesiastical government, to select some one of our modern Churches which happens to be a favourite, delineate its characteristic features, and then proceed to shew that they are a reflection of the pattern presented in the Word of God. That this plan has some recommendations, we can readily believe, but it is no less obvious that it is liable to grave objections. It seems to assume at the commencement the conclusion to which the reasoner can only hope to conduct us after a sound process of logic. It somehow produces the fatal impression, that the writer has determined in the first place that his view of the subject is right, and then goes to Scripture to search for proof of it. The author may be the most impartial and truth-loving of men, but his very plan betrays a preference for some particular system, and thus, at the outset, awakes the prejudices of many readers. Besides, it affords opportunities, for viewing passages of Scripture apart from their connexion, and tempts writers to quote in their favourite texts, the sound of which only is upon their side. For these reasons we do not choose to adopt this method on the present occasion.

The plan of procedure we propose is more unusual, though, we trust, not less satisfactory. We will examine the Holy Scriptures with a view of ascertaining from them the various facts that bear on the government of the Apostolic Church. We will produce the passages, contemplate them in their immediate connexion, unfold their meaning, and try if, by their aid, we can arrive at GREAT PRINCIPLES. We will then turn to our modern Churches, view the different forms of ecclesiastical polity that exist in the world at present, and see which of them it is that embodies all or most of these principles. When this is done, we shall have found the denomination that, in point of government, is best entitled to be regarded as the *Apostolic Church*.

This process of reasoning is so very clear and simple that

* This paragraph was suggested by reading Dr. Paley's Sermon on Rom. xiv. 7.

there is no room for practising deception either on ourselves or our readers. The very humblest intellect may follow our logic to the close. There are but two steps till we arrive at the conclusion. *First*, we are to ascertain from the unerring Word of God what were the main principles in the government of the Churches founded by the Apostles of the Lord ; and, *secondly*, we are to ascertain in which of our modern Churches these main principles are most fully acknowledged and carried out. We will then apply to the settlement of the matter an axiom, radiant in the light of its own self-evidence. That axiom is, THE MODERN CHURCH WHICH EMBODIES IN ITS GOVERNMENT MOST APOSTOLIC PRINCIPLES, COMES NEAREST IN ITS GOVERNMENT TO THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.





APOSTOLIC PRINCIPLES.

FROM a careful examination of the Scripture, we find at least four different kinds of office-bearers in the Apostolic Church:—1. Apostles. 2. Evangelists. 3. Bishops, also called pastors and teachers. 4. Deacons. Each one of these had a right to exercise all the offices inferior to his own; but one filling an inferior, had no right to discharge the duties of a superior office. Thus, the Apostolic office included all the others; and a bishop or elder had the right to act as a deacon, so long as his doing so did not impede the due discharge of duties peculiarly his own. A deacon, on the other hand, had no right to exercise the office of a bishop; nor had a bishop any authority to take on him the duties of an apostle. Each superior office included all below it.

Two of these offices—those of apostle and evangelist—were temporary, necessary at the first establishment of Christianity, but not necessary to be perpetuated. The *apostles* were witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, endowed with the power of working miracles and of conferring the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands, the infallible expounders of the Divine will, and the founders of the Christian Church; and, having served the purpose for which they were sent, they disappeared out of the world, and, as apostles, have left no successors. *Evangelists* were missionaries—men who travelled from place to place preaching the Gospel, and who acted as the assistants and delegates of the apostles in organizing Churches. Of these, Philip and Timothy and Titus were the most eminent examples. It deserves to be remarked, with regard to these temporary, or, as they are usually called, extraordinary office-bearers, that their sphere of duty was not limited to a congregation, but extended to the Church at

large. They were members of any Christian Society, within whose bounds they resided for a time, but their mission was to the world, and their authority extended to the Church universal.

The offices of *bishop* and *deacon* were, on the other hand, designed to be perpetual in the Church. The bishops, or, as they are more usually called, elders,* and pastors, and teachers, were office-bearers, whose duty it was to instruct and govern the Church. The deacons had charge of temporal concerns, and were entrusted with the special duty of ministering to the necessities of the poor. The Church can never cease to have need of these two offices, so long as its members have spiritual and temporal wants to be supplied. But it is to be observed, with regard to the bishops and deacons, that they were mainly congregational officers. The sphere of their duty was not so general as that of the apostles, prophets, and evangelists, but lay for the most part within the bounds of that particular Church or district for which they were appointed to act.

Dr. Campbell thus expounds the special necessity that existed in the Primitive Church, both for the temporary and perpetual office-bearers:—"To take a similitude from temporal things: it is one thing to conquer a kingdom and become master of it, and another thing to govern it when conquered, so as to retain the possession which has been acquired. The same agents and the same expedients are not properly adapted to both. For the first of these purposes, there was a set of extraordinary ministers or officers in the Church, who, like the military forces intended for conquest, could not be fixed to a particular spot whilst there remained any provinces to conquer. Their charge was, in a manner, universal, and their functions ambulatory. For the second, there was a set of ordinary ministers or pastors, corresponding to civil governors, to whom it was necessary to allot distinct charges or precincts, to which their services were chiefly to be confined, in order to instruct the people, to preside in the public worship and religious ordinances, and to give them the necessary assistance for the regulation of their conduct.

* This is assumed for the present: it will be proved afterwards.

Without this second arrangement, the acquisitions made could not have been long retained. There must have ensued an universal relapse into idolatry and infidelity. This distinction of ministers into extraordinary and ordinary, has been admitted by controvertists on both sides, and therefore cannot justly be considered as introduced (which sometimes happens to distinctions) to serve an hypothesis."* With these preliminary observations, we proceed in search of—

The First Principle.

All offices in the Christian Church take origin from the Lord Jesus. Himself is the Author and embodiment of them all; He is the Apostle of our profession; He is an Evangelist, preaching peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh; He is the great Pastor or Shepherd of the sheep—the Bishop of souls; and He is the Deacon, or servant, who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. All offices in the Church are embodied in the person of Christ.

The Apostles were the only office-bearers chosen during the lifetime of the Lord. They held their appointments immediately from Himself. They were called to the work of the ministry by His voice, and they received their commission at His hands. Simon and Andrew were casting their nets into the Lake of Galilee, as Jesus walked upon the beach, but at His call they left their nets to follow Him through the world. The sons of Zebedee heard His voice, and forthwith they forgot both father and mother in their ambition to become fishers of men. When Christ said, Follow me, Levi forsook the receipt of custom, and was a publican no more. The personal call of the Lord Jesus was then, and is still, the first and best of all authority to hold office in the Church of God. Let a man only satisfy us that he holds his appointment directly from the Lord, as the Apostles did, and we require no more to induce us to submit to him.

But after the Lord had ascended to heaven, the personal

* Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. Lecture iv., 3rd Edition, London, 1824.

call, except in case of Paul, who was one born out of due time, was not the passport of any man either to the ministry or apostleship. Men were no more put into office by the living voice of the Lord Jesus. The departure of the Master, and the vacancy left in the list of Apostles by the death of Judas, gave opportunity for bringing into operation a new principle. The first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles brings the whole case before us. Let us specially examine the passage—Acts i. 13-26—that we may have full possession of the facts. It appears that, in the interval between the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost, the disciples met for prayer and supplication in an upper room of the city of Jerusalem. The mother and brethren of Jesus were present, as were also the eleven Apostles. Taken together, they numbered one hundred and twenty in all. Peter rose and addressed the company. He reminded them of the vacancy in the apostleship. Judas, who betrayed the Master, was dead, and the office that he forfeited by his transgression must be conferred upon another. He states the necessary qualifications of him who was to be the successor of Judas; he must be one who had intercourse with the eleven from the commencement of Christ's ministry to the close. He states the duties of the new apostle; he was to be with the others a witness of Christ's resurrection. Such was the case that Peter put before the men and brethren, met together in that upper room of Jerusalem. We then read in verse 23—“THEY APPOINTED TWO, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.” In consequence of this double choice, it became necessary to decide which should be regarded as the true apostle; which, after prayer, was done by casting lots. But let it be particularly observed that, while Peter explained the necessary qualifications, and the peculiar duties of the office, the appointment of the person did not rest with Peter, but with the men and brethren to whom the address of Peter was directed. Farther, it is not to be forgotten that the office to which Matthias succeeded is, in the 20th verse, termed a *bishoprick*, and how it is said in the 25th verse, he had “to take part of this *ministry* and apostleship.” The men and brethren, at the instigation of

Peter, exercised the right of appointing a man to a bishopric—that is, to the office of a bishop, and to take part in the ministry. In the Apostolic Church, the people appointed Matthias to be a minister—a bishop—an apostle. The case recorded in Acts xiv. 23, is to the same effect, though, from a mistranslation, the force of it is lost upon the English reader. The authorized version represents the two Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, as *ordaining* elders in every church; whereas the true meaning of the word in the original is, “to elect by a show of hands,”—a fact now admitted by the best expositors.* We must not allow a faulty translation to rob us of the testimony of Scripture to an important fact—namely, that the elders of the New Testament Church were appointed to office by the popular vote.

The sixth chapter of Acts comes next under consideration. At the period to which the narrative there recorded refers, the disciples at Jerusalem had grown numerous. The Grecians began to complain against the Hebrews, how that their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Hitherto the twelve had attended to the wants of the poor; but their hands were at the same time full of other work, and, among such a multitude, it is not surprising that some were neglected, nor is it very wonderful, considering what human nature is, that some were found to murmur, even when apostles managed the business. What was now to be done? A division of offices was clearly a necessity. But, were the apostles to take it on themselves to select persons on whom should devolve the duty of attending to the temporal wants of the community? Had they done so, few would dispute their right, or venture to charge inspired men with the exercise of a despotic or unwarranted authority. But, instead of this, they adopted a course of procedure unaccountable to us on any other principle, than that they purposely managed the matter in such a way as would guide the Church in the appointment of office-bearers when themselves would be removed, and thus form a precedent for future ages. The apostles summoned the multitude together and explained the case. They said their appropriate business as ministers was

* See Dean Alford on the passage.

with the Word of God. They said it was unreasonable for them to have to neglect the spiritual province, in order to attend to temporal concerns; and they called upon the brethren to look out among themselves for seven men, of good character, gifted with wisdom and the Spirit of God, who might be appointed to take charge of this secular business, and who would leave the apostles free to attend to duties peculiarly their own—namely, prayer and the ministry of the Word. “And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and THEY CHOSE Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Simon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” (Acts vi. 5, 6.) The seven men whom the multitude chose on this occasion were the first *deacons*. Though not expressly called so in the Scriptures, yet they are admitted to have been such, by almost universal consent. The lowest office-bearers, therefore, in the Apostolic Church, were chosen by the people.

Here, then, are three clear facts, fully sufficient to be the basis of a principle. The first chapter of Acts supplies us with an instance of the assembled men and brethren appointing to office one who was both an apostle and a minister. The fourteenth chapter shows that the elders of the congregation were chosen by popular suffrage. The sixth chapter furnishes an example of the whole multitude of the disciples choosing seven men to be deacons. On these three facts, clear and irresistible, we found the principle of POPULAR ELECTION. The conclusion that follows from this evidence, we find it absolutely impossible to evade, namely—that in the Apostolic Church *the office-bearers were chosen by the people.*

The Second Principle.

There is a class of office-bearers very frequently mentioned as existing in the early Church, and to which, as yet, we have only made a slight allusion. We mean the *elder*, or

presbyter, as he is frequently called. This church-officer is often mentioned in the Acts and Epistles; but an attentive reader will not fail to remark that no passage of Scripture ever speaks of him as holding an office distinct from the *bishop*. The same verse never speaks of bishops and elders. When Paul, for example, writes to the Philippian Church (i. 1), he mentions the bishops and deacons, but says nothing of elders. When James directs the sick to call for the elders of the Church (v. 14), he says nothing of bishops. If the offices of bishop and elder were quite distinct—if a bishop were an office-bearer bearing rule over a number of elders, it does seem strange that no passage of Scripture speaks at the same time of bishops and elders. There is one supposition, and only one, that would furnish a satisfactory reason for this fact. If the two terms be only different names for the same office, then to speak of *bishops and elders* would be a violation of the laws of language—it would be tautology—it would be the same thing as to speak of presbyters and elders, or of bishops *and* bishops. To suppose that the two offices were identical accounts sufficiently for the significant fact that they are never mentioned together in the same passage of the Word of God; for it is plain that one of the terms being adequate to indicate the office-bearer intended, there was no need to introduce the other at the same time.

Still there must be something stronger than a presumption to warrant us in saying that the two terms were only different names for the same person. However improbable it may appear, it is still possible that these two, bishop and elder, were distinct office-bearers, even though the same passage never speaks of them together. This obliges us to consult the Scriptures farther on this question.

The first passage that comes before us is—Titus i. 5-7—
“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.” This passage

strongly confirms the truth of the supposition already made, that the two offices were identical. It appears that Paul left Titus behind him in Crete to ordain elders in every city. To guide him in the discharge of this duty, the Apostle proceeds to state the qualifications of an elder. No private member of the Church was eligible to that office except he was a man of blameless life, the husband of one wife, and had obedient children; "for," says he, "a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God." Dr. King well observes on this passage, "that the term *elder*, used at the commencement, is exchanged for the term *bishop* in the conclusion, while the same office-bearer is spoken of. An *elder* must have such and such qualifications. Why? Because a *bishop* must be blameless, as the steward of God. Does not this identify the elder and the bishop? If not, identification is impossible. Were it said, the Lord Mayor of London must devote himself to his duties, for the chief magistrate of such a city has great responsibilities, would not the language bear, that the Lord Mayor and the chief magistrate were the same office-bearer? Otherwise, the representation would be absurd; for why should the mayor devote himself to his duties because some other person had great responsibilities? Yet the mayor and chief magistrate are not more identified in this comparison than are the elder and bishop in Paul's instructions to Titus."* It must be evident to every unprejudiced man that the Apostle would never state as a reason for ordaining none but men of good moral character to the office of the *eldership*, that a *bishop* must be blameless, if he did not understand that elder and bishop were only different designations for the same office. On any other supposition, the language of the Apostle would be without coherence and without sense.

Again, we turn to 2 John i., and we find how the Apostle John styles himself an *elder*—"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth." Next comes up 1 Peter v. 1, and we find there that the Apostle Peter calls himself an *elder*—"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the suffer-

* Dr. King's Exposition and Defence, pp. 176-7. Edinr., 1853.

ings of Christ." That John and Peter were both bishops all admit; but these passages show that they were elders also. This, however, brings us but a step to the conclusion. It may be true that every general is an officer, but it does not follow from this that every officer is a general. A bishop may, like John and Peter, be an elder, but it does not necessarily follow that an elder is a bishop. This may be true, but we require more proof before we can reach such a conclusion. This we have as fully as can be desired in Acts xx. 17-28. We read there how Paul sent for the elders of the Church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus. He spoke of his ministry in their city, the great theme of his preaching being repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. He foretold the afflictions awaiting him at Jerusalem and elsewhere, and he saddened their hearts by saying to them that they would see his face no more. And he warned them to take heed to themselves and to "the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them *overseers*"—that is, *bishops*, as the word is elsewhere rendered. Every reader acquainted with the original is aware that the word translated *overseers*, in Acts xx. 28, is the very same as that translated *bishops* in Phil. i. 1, so that we have here the evidence of inspiration, that the elders of Ephesus were bishops by appointment of the Holy Ghost. This makes the chain of reasoning strong and conclusive. Bishops, as we have seen, were elders, and elders, as we now see, were bishops. This conducts us to a principle—namely, that, IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH, THE OFFICES OF BISHOP AND ELDER WERE IDENTICAL. An elder was not inferior to a bishop, nor was a bishop superior to an elder. It was the same office-bearer who was known by these different names.

We are not disposed to attach much value to the opinion of such a man as Edward Gibbon, on any question of doctrine or morality, but that distinguished historian was competent to grapple with a matter of fact, and may be heard as one who, from being unprejudiced in favour of any religious system whatever, was in a position to judge impartially in a case of this kind. Speaking of the government and administration of the Church prior to the Council of Nice, he says,

“The public functions of religion were solely entrusted to the established ministers of the Church, bishops and the presbyters; *two appellations which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office, and the same order of persons.* The name of *presbyter* was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of *bishop* denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care.”*

The Third Principle.

Let it not be forgotten that we have now ascertained that presbyter and bishop were, in *their first origin*, only different names for the same ecclesiastical office-bearer. Enough has been found in the Scriptures to satisfy us that bishops were elders, and that elders were bishops, in the Apostolic Church. We are warranted, therefore, to regard this fact as fully substantiated, while we proceed to the discovery of a third principle.

The fourteenth chapter of Acts describes a missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. There was an attempt made to stone them at Iconium, but they fled to Lystra and Derbe. When Paul made a cripple at Lycaonia leap and walk, the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and it was with some difficulty the people in their pagan ignorance were restrained from paying divine honours to the two preachers. But so fickle are the sentiments of the multitude that, shortly afterwards, the great Apostle was stoned nearly to death at the very place where he had been almost worshipped as a god. Barely escaping with his life, Paul and his companion revisited Derbe, and Lystra, and Iconium, and Antioch, preaching the Gospel, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith. And the sacred historian, in the narrative of this evangelistic tour, informs us of this important fact, that *they appointed elders in every Church.* His words are—“And when they

* History of the Decline and Fall, chap. xv.

had chosen for them, by suffrage, elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts xiv. 23). We have seen already that a Church in Scripture signifies any assembly of Christians, however great or small. It was the primitive practice to call the believers residing in any town, however large, or in any village, however small, the Church of that place. Many of these societies, collected from among the heathen by these pioneers of Christianity, organised in the face of difficulty, and thinned by intimidation, must have been weak in point of numbers. Still, the two Apostles were not satisfied with appointing one elder or bishop in each society, however small in numbers; but as we are taught by the Holy Spirit, they appointed **ELDERS IN EVERY CHURCH**. If, then, the Evangelist Luke, speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, is a true witness, there were more elders than one in each congregation of the Apostolic Church. How many, whether two, three, or more, we are not informed, but that in each Church there was a plurality of elders is clear.

We proceed once more to the twentieth chapter of Acts. Here Paul is represented as travelling from Greece on his way to Jerusalem. Having stopped a week at Troas, he went upon his onward way, sometimes by sea and sometimes by land, striving to reach the Jewish capital before Pentecost. Having touched at Miletus, a seaport of Ionia, thirty-six miles south of Ephesus, he sent a message to that city for the elders of the Church. The words of inspiration are—"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church" (Acts xx. 17). From this, it appears the Church of Ephesus had not only one elder, but more, and we have already seen that, in verse 28, its elders are called bishops. Unless language mean nothing, and the statements of Scripture be as unintelligible as the leaves of the Sybil, there was a *plurality of elders or bishops* in the Church at Ephesus.

Still farther. Philippi was a city on the confines of ancient Thrace. To the classic reader it is known as the place where Augustus and Antony wrested from Brutus and

Cassius, in a pitched battle, the empire of the world ; to the Christian it is remarkable as being the first spot in Europe where the banner of the Cross was unfurled, and sinners listened to the Gospel of Jesus. There the heart of the seller of purple was opened to attend to the things that were spoken of Paul. It was there that, for casting the spirit of divination out of a soothsayer, Paul and Silas were beaten by the magistrates, and had their feet made fast in the stocks. It was there at the dead hour of the night, when the foundations of the prison shook, and every door in the jail flew open, and every man's chains fell from his arms, that the keeper of the prison asked two of his prisoners the most important question that was ever put by a sinner to a minister of God—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In this town of Philippi a Church was organised, though in face of determined opposition ; and, some ten or twelve years after Paul's first visit, he thought it right to address to this Church a letter. This letter has been preserved. It finds a place in the Word of God. It is that known to us as the Epistle to the Philippians. One has some curiosity to read what an apostle thought it good to write to a Church, at the head of whose roll of members stood the names of Lydia and the Jailer. As might be expected, it is full to the brim of precious and consoling truths ; but, what is more to our purpose at present, we find these words in the first verse of the first chapter : "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with THE BISHOPS and deacons." Philippi was, no doubt, a considerable town ; but, in point of population and importance, it was no more to such a city as Dublin or Liverpool than a parish is to a diocese. Yet, in modern times, one bishop is thought sufficient even for London, where professing Christians are numbered by millions, whereas a single Christian congregation gathered out of a heathen population, possessing ecclesiastical existence only for ten or twelve years, exposed to contumely and suffering for Christ's sake, and located in a contemptible town on the outskirts of Macedonia, had a *plurality of bishops*. Paul, in writing to that Church, addresses his epistle to the *bishops* and deacons.

Let the candid reader glance again at the ground over which we have passed. He sees that Paul, in writing his epistle to the Church at Philippi, addressed it to the *bishops*. He sees there were *elders* in the Church at Ephesus when Paul sent for them to Miletus. He finds it stated that Barnabas and Paul ordained *elders in every Church*. How is it possible for him to resist the conclusion that, in Apostolic days, there was in each congregation a plurality of elders, or what we have seen amounts to the same thing, a plurality of bishops? This leads us to the third principle of Apostolic government—that IN EACH CHURCH THERE WAS A PLURALITY OF ELDERS.

The Fourth Principle.

Ordination is the solemn designation of a person to ecclesiastical office with the laying on of hands. Every permanent office-bearer in the Church, whether bishop or deacon, was set apart solemnly to his office by the act of ordination. In its outward form it consisted of three things—fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands. The imposition of hands was used when spiritual gifts were conferred (Acts viii. 17; xix. 6); and it was also practised when the sick were miraculously healed (Mark xvi. 18; Acts ix. 17; xxviii. 8). But, distinct from all such cases, the laying on of hands was used at the ordination of Church office-bearers, and when no extraordinary or miraculous gift was bestowed (Acts vi. 6; xiii. 1-3; and I Tim. iv. 14; v. 22). The withdrawal of miraculous powers cannot therefore be any valid reason why, at ordinations, the practice should be set aside; the imposition of hands in such cases never was the medium of imparting the Holy Ghost, but only the form of investing with ecclesiastical office.

The great question regarding ordination is, whether it is the act of one individual or more, of one elder or many elders, of a bishop or a presbytery? That the Lord Jesus may give a special call to any labourer, and send him to work in His vineyard, none disputes. There can be very

little doubt also that, if an inspired apostle were still upon the earth, he would have the right to ordain alone, if he thought it right to do so. Nay, if some modern evangelist could show, as Titus could, that an apostle had left him behind for this special purpose, he, too, in virtue of the right conferred upon him by a higher power, would have the privilege of ordaining (Titus i. 5). Any one, therefore, claiming the right of doing all that an evangelist did, would require to show that, if not an apostle, he possesses, like Titus, the authority delegated to him by an apostle. But here every ruler in every Church must fail. It remains, therefore, that we examine the Scriptures to discover who it was that, in the absence of apostles, or those delegated by apostles, had the privilege of solemnly setting apart others to ecclesiastical office, and especially to ascertain if this power was lodged in one individual or in more.

First, we turn to 1 Tim. iv. 14. We have there the ordination of Timothy. The Apostle exhorts his son in the faith to employ to good purpose the gift of the ministry that had been conferred upon him. He intimates that this gift had been given by prophecy—that is, in consequence of certain intimations of the prophets, who were numerous in that age of spiritual gifts, marking him out as one who would be an eminent minister. He adds that the gift was conferred *with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*—that is, by the presbyters or elders in their collective capacity. The words of the Apostle are—“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, WITH THE LAYING ON OF THE HANDS OF THE PRESBYTERY.” These words are decisive as to the parties with whom the power of ordination is lodged.

Again, we turn to Acts xiii. 1-3. It appears that, in the Church of Antioch, there were certain prophets and teachers whose names are there recorded. They ministered to the Lord and fasted; and, while thus employed, it was intimated to them by the Holy Ghost that they should separate Barnabas and Saul for missionary work among the Gentiles. Both had been preachers of the Gospel previously; but now they were to enter on a new sphere, and engage in a new

department of the work. It was right, therefore, that the prophets and teachers should solemnly set apart the two brethren to the missionary work by the act of ordination. We read, accordingly, in verse 3, that "when *they* had fasted and prayed, and *laid their hands on them*, they sent them away." The act of ordination was here evidently not the work of one teacher, but of several. A plurality took part in it.

Another instance of a plurality of Church rulers taking part in this rite is recorded in Acts vi. 6. We have there the ordination of the deacons. The Church at Jerusalem chose seven men to attend to the necessities of the poor, "whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, *they laid their hands upon them.*" This is particularly valuable, as it proves that, when it was convenient or practicable for a plurality of rulers to take part in the act of ordination, the apostles themselves preferred that course.

Glance again at the ground over which we have now passed. It was the practice of an apostle, or one directly appointed by an apostle for this specific purpose, to perform alone the act of ordination. But they did not ordain singly where it was possible for them to associate. Where a plurality could be had conveniently, as in the case of the deacons, it was common for more than one to take part in the ceremony. In the absence of apostles we have seen, in the case of Saul and Barnabas, ordination was the act of certain prophets and teachers; and, in the case of Timothy, it was the act of the presbytery. This conducts us to our fourth principle, namely, that, IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH, ORDINATION WAS THE ACT OF THE PRESBYTERY—of a plurality of elders.

The Fifth Principle.

The fifteenth chapter of Acts is much too long to be here transcribed. But, before the reader proceeds farther, let him open the Bible and read that chapter carefully from the commencement to the close. If he is really in search of

truth, and disposed to receive it in its simplicity, the perusal of that chapter will satisfy him that the following facts are there embodied :—

It appears that certain men came down from Judea to Antioch, and taught the Church there that circumcision is necessary to salvation. Paul and Barnabas set themselves to oppose these teachers, but in vain. It was then agreed that certain of the Church of Antioch, including in their number Barnabas and Paul, should go up to Jerusalem and lay the case before the apostles and elders. When they reached Jerusalem—at that time the metropolis of Christianity—the apostles and elders came together to consider the question. At first there was in the assembly considerable difference of opinion. Peter at last rose to speak. He reminded them how God had honoured him in making him the instrument of first preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, and how it had pleased God, without respect of persons, to bestow the Holy Ghost upon them as well as upon Jewish believers. He argues, therefore, that to make circumcision necessary to salvation—to bind a yoke upon the Gentiles which even the Jews were not able to bear—would be to tempt God; and he closes by enunciating the great truth that Jews and Gentiles, both alike, obtain salvation through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Barnabas and Paul followed, declaring that by them, too, God had wrought among the Gentiles miracles and wonders. James next delivered his opinion. He showed that the truth declared by Peter, namely, that God had taken out of the Gentiles a people for His name, was the subject of ancient prophecy. He quotes from the Prophet Amos to show how God had promised to build the tabernacle of David which had fallen into ruins, that the residue of men and the Gentiles called by His name should seek after the Lord. He ends by declaring his judgment to be, that the Gentiles already turned to the Lord should not be troubled with any unnecessary burden, but that they should be directed to abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. The opinion of James was approved by the assembly. The apostles and elders, with the

whole Church, agreed to send Judas and Silas down to Antioch, with Barnabas and Paul, to announce the result. The decision of the meeting was embodied in letters, which ran in the name of the apostles, elders, and brethren, and were addressed to the Gentile Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. The epistle charged those who taught that circumcision was necessary to salvation with troubling the brethren, and subverting their souls; denied that they had authority from the apostles and elders so to teach; mentioned that Judas and Silas were empowered, along with Barnabas and Paul—men who hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus—to declare verbally the decision of the assembly; and stated that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them to impose upon the Gentile converts no burden except abstinence from meats offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. Such was the substance of the letter that was carried down to Antioch by the deputies from the assembly at Jerusalem. The multitude gathered to hear it; it was delivered and read, and the people rejoiced for the consolation. Judas and Silas added their exhortations, and the brethren were confirmed in the faith. Shortly afterwards, Paul, having had some difference with Barnabas, chose Silas as his fellow-traveller, and set out on another missionary journey, the object of which was to visit the converts in every city where he had preached the Word of God, and see how they did. Commended by the brethren to the grace of God, Paul and Silas departed from Antioch, and went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches. Derbe and Lystra and other cities of Asia Minor were visited on this occasion; and, as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees for to keep which were ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem (Acts xvi. 4).

Every candid man must admit that this is a fair representation of all facts bearing on the subject, as put before us in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the Acts. Let it be remarked that, in the simple narrative, the following facts stand noticeably out:—1. That Barnabas and Paul had a dispute about circumcision with certain false teachers who came

down from Judea. 2. This dispute was not settled in the Church of Antioch where it originated. 3. The matter was referred to an external ecclesiastical assembly consisting of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. 4. This assembly met publicly to deliberate on the question. 5. They pronounced a decision. 6. To this decision the Church of Antioch and the Churches of Syria and Cilicia yielded submission.

These facts are on the face of the narrative, and cannot be denied. That they were permitted to take place, and that a record of them is inserted in the Holy Scriptures, seems strange if these things did not happen for an example to us. Were it enough for the Church of Antioch to be made certain of the mind of God upon the point in dispute, Paul, who was present, could have declared this with infallible accuracy; for he was one who not only spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, but who often decided matters equally important by a word from his lips or a stroke of his pen. A single sentence from the very apostle who was then at Antioch is admitted by the Church of God to be decisive on any point of Christian faith or Christian duty; so that, if an infallible decision was the only thing required, one does not see why the matter was ever carried farther. When the case did come up to Jerusalem, had the appeal been to inspiration only, one does not see what business the elders had to meet with the apostles to consider the matter; surely the apostles were competent to declare the mind of God without the aid of uninspired men. If nothing was necessary but for the apostles to pronounce an infallible deliverance, why was there such a thing as disputing in the assembly, or even the semblance of deliberation, or why should one apostle after another state his opinion? We would suppose the deliverance of a single inspired man quite sufficient. If the disputing that occurred in the assembly was only among the elders, the elders must have been very silly to dispute about a matter that inspiration was to settle, and with which they, as uninspired men, could have nothing to do, but to listen to the voice of God; and why did the apostles permit them to dispute, when a word from the infallible expounders of the Divine will could have decided the question? And when

the decree went forth, why was it in the name of the apostles and *elders* that were at Jerusalem? There is one way of accounting for this satisfactorily, and only one so far as we can see. These events were permitted to take place, and are recorded for our guidance under all similar circumstances. Should any difference arise, which cannot be settled within the limits of the congregation where it occurs, it is to be referred for settlement to the rulers of the Church in their assembled capacity. If the apostles were alive upon the earth to meet with the elders, and by aid of their inspiration, to guide them to an unerring decision, and were we to refer our differences to such an assembly, this would be literal obedience to the example put before us in the Divine Word. But when, in their personal absence, we refer our differences to the assembly of the elders, and when the elders, guided by the inspired writings of the apostles as contained in the Scriptures, pronounce a deliverance on the question, and when to such deliverance we yield submission in the Lord, this is more than acting up to the spirit, it is acting up to everything but the letter, of apostolic example.

We are thus conducted to this twofold fact that, in the Apostolic Church, there existed the privilege of referring disputed matters to the decision of an assembly of living men, external to the congregation where such dispute originated, and composed of the rulers of the Church; and that this ecclesiastical assembly, in the absence of the apostles, consisting simply of the rulers of the Church, has a right to meet, to deliberate, to decide, and to demand obedience to its decisions in the Lord. This twofold principle we designate *the privilege of appeal to the assembly of elders, and the right of government exercised by them in their associate capacity.*

It would scarcely be necessary to say a word on the presence of the *brethren* in the assembly at Jerusalem, were it not that some parties have made this fact the foundation for special cavil. As they are mentioned separately from the apostles and elders, it seems to us clear that the "brethren" must have been the non-official members of the Church, or, as in modern times they would be called, the laity. That

they were present at the meeting; that they concurred in the decision; and that the letter sent down to Antioch was written in their name, as well as in that of the apostles and elders, are, in our opinion, undeniable facts—patent on the face of the narrative. But we have not all the facts of the case before us, except we observe, *first*, that the original reference from Antioch was not to the brethren, but to the apostles and elders (verse 2); *second*, that it is not said that the brethren assembled to deliberate on the question, but that “the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter” (verse 6); *third*, that we do not read of any of the brethren speaking on the subject submitted, but that they “kept silence” while others spoke (verse 12); *fourth*, that the decrees are not said to be ordained of the brethren, but “of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem” (Acts xvi. 4). The unprejudiced inquirer will observe that the private members of the Church, here designated the “brethren,” did not ordain the decrees, nor speak in the meeting, nor assemble to deliberate, nor was it to them that the appeal from Antioch was brought. He will, on the other hand, remark that they were present in the assembly, that they concurred in the finding, and that, as it was important to show that all the Christians of Jerusalem were unanimous on the subject, the letter embodying the decision was written in their name as well as in that of the apostles and elders. From motives of courtesy, and for the purpose of Christian salutation, Silvanus and Timotheus are represented as uniting with Paul, in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, but this does not imply that Silvanus and Timotheus were inspired men, much less that they were conjoined in the authorship of the letter. And, in the same way, the letter addressed to the Gentiles of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, was the letter of the apostles and elders—the name of the brethren being added to show, not that they took part in the composition, but that they concurred in the sentiments. Persons, therefore, who desire to convince us that private Christians in the Apostolic Church were not only present as auditors at assemblies of Church rulers, but also shared in the deliberations, and acted as constituent

members of ecclesiastical courts, would require to produce something much more explicit on the subject than the 15th chapter of Acts. To us it seems clear that the apostles and elders assembled, deliberated, and decreed; the brethren were present, listened, and concurred. The apostles and elders were, as we would say, members of court; the brethren were only auditors, who gave their assent to the decision of the rulers.

Our fifth principle, therefore, may be summed up in these terms—**THE PRIVILEGE OF APPEAL TO THE ASSEMBLY OF ELDERS, AND THE RIGHT OF GOVERNMENT EXERCISED BY THEM IN THEIR CORPORATE CHARACTER.**



The Sixth Principle.

It is a distinctive feature of the apostolic government that Church rulers did not render spiritual obedience to any temporal potentate, or to any ecclesiastical chief. Paul seldom commences any of his epistles without reminding his readers that he held his apostleship by the will of God, not by the favour of man. Take, as an example, Gal. i. 1:—"Paul an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)," etc. In the picture of apostolic times presented in the New Testament, we can detect no instance of the Church acknowledging the spiritual dominion of any earthly monarch, or consenting to surrender a portion of its religious liberty for any temporal advantage whatever. We find no provision made in the Gospel for the supremacy of a Christian, much less of a heathen, king in the things of God. The law of Scripture is express: "Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark xii. 17). In all temporal matters the members of the Apostolic Church regarded it their duty to yield obedience to the civil rulers of the country in which they lived; in all spiritual matters they did homage to a higher power. In temporal matters an apostle bowed to the laws of the land as administered by the

magistrate of a village; in spiritual matters he would not bow to Cesar on his throne.

It does not alter the case to say that we look in vain for such an example to the Scriptures, owing to the fact that, in the primitive age, no temporal prince was made a convert to Christianity, and therefore none was in circumstances to dispense ecclesiastical patronage and serve as the depository of spiritual power. But God is not limited by want of instruments. The same grace that subdued Saul of Tarsus, at a time when he was breathing out slaughter against the saints of the Lord, could have converted Pilate, or Agrippa, or Cesar at Rome. Had the example been useful, the necessary means of supplying the example would not have been lacking to God. The very fact that, in apostolic days, God did not take some heathen prince and make a Christian of him, in order that he might fill the office of temporal head of the Church on earth, is in itself an instructive fact—fraught with a moral. And let it be remarked that the Scriptures make no provision for such an occurrence in after times. They contain no principle authorising the prince either to claim or exercise authority in ecclesiastical matters, when in the course of ages a Christian potentate would appear. If there be such a principle it is unknown to us; and it is certainly incumbent on those who approve of such an arrangement, to produce from the Scriptures, if they can, their warrant for maintaining that a Christian king has a right to exercise supremacy over the Church in spiritual matters. Till this is done we must be excused for believing that no temporal prince has a right to act as a lord over the heritage of God.

Nor was supreme spiritual power lodged in the hands of any office-bearer of the Church, however distinguished by his gifts, his sufferings, or his abundant labours. The private members, indeed, had it in command to obey the rulers or elders of the Church; but the elders, on their part, were enjoined not to act as lords over God's heritage, but to be examples to the flock (1 Pet. v. 3). Even the apostles did not claim to have dominion over the people's faith, but only to be helpers of their joy (2 Cor. i. 24). And among these apostles it does not appear that pre-eminence was vested in

any. Peter is the only one for whom, in later times, official supremacy is ever claimed : but he never claimed it for himself ; he always acted with his fellow-apostles as a simple preacher of the cross of Christ ; he is never presented in the Scriptures as nominating to ecclesiastical office, or as exercising any peculiar control over the inferior officers in the Church. On one noted occasion, when he exhibited some tergiversation, we are told of another apostle who withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed (Gal. ii. 11). The Scripture, therefore, furnishes no ground whatever for believing that supreme spiritual power is deposited in any ecclesiastical officer any more than in any temporal prince.

The Scriptures are to be our guide on this as well as on all other religious matters. We turn to the following passages, and find where the source of all spiritual power exists :—

Eph. i. 20-23 :—“ Which He [God] wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave *Him to be head over all things to the Church*, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Eph. v. 23 :—“ For the husband is the head of the wife, even *as Christ is the head of the Church* ; and He is the Saviour of the body.”

Col. i. 18 :—“ And He [Christ] *is the head of the body, the Church* ; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.”

The passages now quoted are taken from the Holy Scriptures—the only rule of Christian faith and practice. We have given them our attentive consideration : and they have led us to the conclusion that *the sole headship of Christ over the Church* was the doctrine of apostolic days. What the head is to the human body Christ is to the Church ; and as the body cannot have two heads, so the Church cannot have two heads—neither Christ and the Pope, nor Christ and the monarch. To us there seems no middle way in this matter.

We must either reject the authority of the Bible, or believe what it teaches—namely, that *Christ is head over all things to the Church*. We choose the latter. The HEADSHIP OF CHRIST is the sixth principle of government that we find in operation in apostolic days. Let us observe the consequence of this principle; for as Christ is the Head of the Church, the members of the Church are to be subject to Him; and, as we have no way of ascertaining the mind of Christ except through the Scriptures, it follows that the affairs of the Church are to be managed by those officers whom the Lord Jesus has entrusted with that power, and are, without the interference of any external authority, to be regulated according to the mind of God as expressed in His Word.





APPLICATION OF THE TEST.

LET the reader seriously consider the evidence submitted in the previous chapter, and we think he will be satisfied that there is Divine authority for saying that the principles, of which the following facts are the realisation, were in practical operation in the Apostolic Church :—

1. The office-bearers were chosen by the people.
2. The office of bishop and elder was identical.
3. There was a plurality of elders in each Church.
4. Ordination was the act of a presbytery—that is, of a plurality of elders.
5. There was the privilege of appeal to the assembly of elders; and the power of government was exercised by them in their associate capacity.
6. The only Head of the Church was the Lord Jesus Christ.

The principles embodied in these six facts cover the whole platform of Church Government, each rising in importance above that which precedes it, in an ascending series, from Popular Election up to the Headship of the Lord. We have been conducted to them, not by any process of wiredrawn logic, but by receiving the Scriptures, as we think every child of God should receive them, except there be manifest and good reasons to the contrary, in the plain, simple, and natural sense. The most unlettered reader, if he be only unprejudiced and honest, cannot examine the passages of Scripture we have specified, and fail to see that these six great principles were all embodied in the government of the Apostolic Church. But whether they are embodied in those forms of ecclesiastical government at present existing in the world is another and a very important question—a question which it is now our business to answer. We proceed, there-

fore, to bring the existing systems in succession to the test of the apostolic standard.



Prelacy.

As already explained, Prelacy is that system of Church Government which is dispensed by archbishops, bishops, priests, deans, deacons, and other office-bearers. It is exemplified in the Church of Rome and in the Church of England, both of which are prelatic in their government; the difference being, that the prelacy of Rome vests the ecclesiastical supremacy in the Pope, while the prelacy of England vests it in the reigning monarch. With this exception, the two Churches, however widely they may differ in doctrine, are, in every important point of government, the same. As many may be disposed to consider the prelacy of a Protestant Church much less objectionable than the prelacy of Rome, and as we have neither necessity nor desire to take any unfair advantage in argument, we prefer to bring the prelacy of Protestantism into comparison with the apostolic standard.

The fountain of jurisdiction in the Church of England is the monarch for the time being, who inherits the throne by hereditary descent, and who, irrespective of all character, is, by act of Parliament, the only supreme head of the Church of England and Ireland (37 Henry VIII., chap. 17). No person can be received into the ministry of that Church till he subscribe this article:—"That the king's majesty, under God, is the only supreme governor of this realm, and of all other his highness' dominions and countries, *as well in all spiritual, or ecclesiastical things* or causes, as temporal" (Canon 36). The appointment of all the archbishops and bishops is vested in the Crown, which is guided in the selection by the political administration of the day—a body composed of persons of every hue of religious profession, and only kept in its place by the majority of votes it can command in Parliament. The highest ecclesiastical office-bearers under the Crown are the archbishops, of whom there

are two in England—the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and two in Ireland—the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin. Each of these has under him a number of suffragan bishops, and each bishop has under his care the inferior clergy of his diocese, who preach and dispense the ordinances of religion to such inhabitants of their parishes as are pleased to receive them. The parish clergy are, in some instances, appointed by the Crown, in others by the bishop, in others by a lay patron, and sometimes in a mode still more objectionable.

Such is Prelacy in its most favourable form, as presented in the Protestant Establishment of England. Let us compare it with the system of government which we have already ascertained to exist in the Apostolic Church.

In the Apostolic Church, the office-bearers were chosen by the people; but, in the Church of England, archbishops and bishops are chosen by the Crown, and the subordinate clergy are appointed to their charges either by the diocesan, or by some landed proprietor, or by some civil corporation. The people of the Apostolic Church exercised the privilege of electing an apostle; the people in the Church of England have not power to elect a curate.

In the Apostolic Church, the office of bishop and elder was identical; the elders of Ephesus were the bishops of the flock; but, in the Church Establishment, it is very different. The apostolic elder, being a teacher and ruler of a congregation, resembles more closely the parish clergyman than any other office-bearer in the Church of England. But it is very evident that, in that Church, a parish clergyman holds a position widely different from a bishop. The rector wields the jurisdiction of a parish; but the bishop governs a diocese, that usually includes a whole multitude of parishes. The one presides over a single congregation; the other, over many congregations. The one exercises authority over the laity, but a Church of England bishop is the ruler of a band of clergy. If, then, the parish clergyman correspond to the presbyter or elder of apostolic times, it is very clear that, in the Establishment, the bishop and elder are not identical in office. In the Established Church every elder is subject to

his bishop ; but, in the Apostolic Church, every elder was a bishop himself.

In the Church of England each congregation is under the care of one presbyter. When a second is called in, he is a mere curate in the employment of another, and void of all ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It is not very common, and certainly not essential to the system, to have more than one presbyter or elder in each Church ; whereas, we have seen that, in each Church of apostolic times, there was a plurality of elders.

In the Church of England ordination is an act exclusively performed by a prelate ; he may ask others to unite with him, but it is his presence not theirs that is essential to the act : whereas, in the Apostolic Church, it was the practice to ordain men to the office of the ministry with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

In the Church of England, no matter what ecclesiastical grievance may exist, there is no power of appeal except to the courts of law, or the Queen's Privy Council, or some such tribunal. The practice is unknown in the denomination of bringing any matter for consideration before the assembly of elders for them to decide upon, in accordance with the apostles' word. But this, as we have seen, was the mode in which affairs were managed in the Apostolic Church.

In our Protestant Establishment the monarch is, by act of Parliament, head of the Church, and to the king or queen, as the case may be, the 37th Article informs us that "the chief government of all estates of the realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, *in all causes*, doth appertain ;" whereas, in apostolic times, the Church had no head but Jesus Christ.

We have thus examined and compared the two Churches as closely and candidly as it is possible for us to do, and we feel ourselves forced to the conclusion that, of the six great principles of ecclesiastical government that met in the Apostolic Church, there is not one embodied in the Prelacy of the Church of England. We infer, therefore, that, while that Church may be entitled to great respect as a human system, maintained by act of Parliament, and numbering in its ranks many estimable people, there is no ground whatever for re-

garding it, in point of government, as an Apostolic Church. At the peril of excommunication we feel bound to declare our conviction that the government of the Church of England is repugnant to the Word of God.*

Independency.

It is difficult to ascertain the particulars of ecclesiastical order approved by Independents, inasmuch as we are not aware that they have embodied their views of what the Scriptures teach on the subject in any common formula, and as every congregation, standing apart from every other, may differ sometimes widely on important points. We are, therefore, left to discover their views of Church polity from the general practices known to exist among them, and from the principles advocated by their most eminent writers. These, however, are sufficiently known to enable us to compare the Independent system of Church Government with the apostolic standard.

The principle of popular election existed, as we have seen, in the Primitive Church, and had the sanction of the apostles of the Lord. Among the Independents this principle is preserved in its integrity: with them every ecclesiastical office-bearer is chosen by the people.

In the Apostolic Church the office of bishop and elder was identical; the bishop did not exercise any authority over the elder; on the contrary, every bishop was an elder, and every elder a bishop. So it is with Independents. Every one of their pastors fills the office of bishop and elder, and none of them claims authority over others. With them a bishop and

* No. VII. of the *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical*, agreed upon with the king's license in 1603, and republished by the Prayer-Book and Homily Society (1852), is as follows:—"Whosoever shall hereafter affirm, That the government of the Church of England under his majesty by archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons, and the rest that bear office in the same, is anti-Christian or repugnant to the Word of God; let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and so continue till he repent, and publicly revoke such his wicked errors."

elder are only different names for the same office-bearers, as it was in apostolic days.

We have seen how, in Apostolic times, there was a plurality of elders in each Church. Here the Independent system fails. On the principles of that theory of Church Government, it is scarcely possible to have a plurality of elders, and in practice it rarely, if ever, occurs. Among them there is only one minister, or bishop, or elder, in each congregation. Practically, their system admits only of one elder to each Church. If an apostle were writing an epistle to an Independent Church, he would never think of addressing it to the *bishops*, as well as to the deacons, for the simple reason that, with them, there is usually but *one* bishop to one Church: nor could an apostle ever send for the *elders* of an Independent Church, as Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus, for the plain reason that, in an Independent Church, there is usually but one elder. A single pastor, with deacons under him, governing a Church, is the prominent feature that the Independent system everywhere presents—an arrangement than which none can be more opposed to the plurality of elders that existed in each congregation in primitive times. Some Independents attempt to palliate their departure from apostolic precedent, by saying that a plurality of elders is desirable; but their Churches are not able to support them. Does it never strike our esteemed brethren that there must be some remarkable disparity between the apostolic system and theirs, when the richest of their Churches now cannot afford to possess what was possessed by the very poorest Churches in the days of the apostles? It is the Word of God that says of Paul and Barnabas—“they ordained elders in *every* Church.”

The office-bearers of the Apostolic Church were set apart to the discharge of their peculiar duties with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Among Independents, however, ordination of any sort is not essential; frequently it is counted unnecessary. Instances are known of persons acting as pastors of Churches for a lifetime, who were never inducted to office with the imposition of hands and prayer. Ordination is not required by the system. With them it is a

mere matter of taste, left in each case to the individual choice. If the newly-elected pastor choose to have himself ordained, it can only be done in a way inconsistent with Independent principles. The congregation, being destitute of a plurality of elders, his ordination can only come from the people, who have no Scriptural right to confer it, or from the neighbouring pastor. But who does not see that the latter practice is entirely at variance with the foundation principle of Independency, namely, that each congregation has *within* itself complete materials for government? So much is this felt to be the case, that, while some ask the assistance of the pastors of the district on such occasions, those who choose to carry out their Congregationalist principle with a little more consistency make light of ordination, think it unnecessary, and prefer to go without it.

In the Apostolic Church there was the privilege of appeal to the assembly of elders. Among the Independents nothing of this kind can exist. The distinctive principle of their system precludes all appeal. The decision of the pastor, and deacons, and people, assembled in a church-meeting, is final in every case. No matter how partial or unjust their decision is felt to be, there is no power of bringing the sentence under review of a less prejudiced and more enlightened tribunal. The judgment of the Church may be in strict accordance with justice, or it may be the offspring of prejudice or malevolence in a few of the leaders of the meeting, masked, of course, under zeal for purity of communion, and for the cause of religion; but, no matter how superficial the investigation, or how deep the wrong, the system deprives the injured man of the privilege of appeal, and clothes the perpetrators with irresponsible power. By denying and repudiating all association, it enables the rulers to be, if they please, the tyrants of the Church, and strips the injured of the possibility of redress. "Independency," says Dr. Wardlaw, "is the *competency* of every distinct Church to manage, *without appeal*, its own affairs." * This is an ingenious mode of disguising the most repulsive feature of the system. Very

* Dr. Wardlaw's Congregational Independency, p. 232. Glasgow, 1848.

few would deny that a Church is competent to manage its own affairs in such a way as to obviate the necessity of appeal; but what we assert is, that, when the Church lacks the necessary wisdom and discretion to do so, appeal among Independents is not permitted, the injured is deprived of redress, and power, for which the possessor is irresponsible to man, degenerates into tyranny when it is unwisely exercised, and there is nothing to keep it in check. The case of Antioch shows that, when a difference arose in the primitive Church, there was a right of referring the matter to the assembly of elders, who, under the guidance of the apostles, settled the business. Elders might still meet, and the written word of the apostles is accessible to all, and a decision pronounced by parties removed from the scene of controversy, untainted by local prejudices, and standing far away from the partisanship of the leaders, might go far now, as in ancient days, to calm dissensions, should they unfortunately arise. But Independents, in this respect, repudiate the apostolic example. Their principle is to refuse all recognition of external authority, to make the decision of the Church-meeting final in every case, and to deny to them who are aggrieved the privilege of appeal.

The Headship of Christ was a principle of apostolic times. Independents, we are happy to say, acknowledge this principle in all its integrity.

The result of our comparison is, that there are three principles of the Apostolic Church that we find fully acknowledged and acted upon among our Independent brethren, namely, popular election, the identity of presbyter and bishop, and the Headship of Christ over the Church. But there are three apostolic principles that we fail to find in their system, namely, the plurality of elders in each Church, ordination with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, and the privilege of appeal. We conclude, therefore, that, while the Independent system of government advances to the pattern of primitive times much more closely than that which exists in the Churches of England and Rome, still it is not the system entitled to plead the precedent of the Apostolic Church.

Presbytery.

It only now remains that we compare the Presbyterian system with the standard of the law and of the testimony. The term *Presbyterian* is derived from the word *presbytery*, because the leading characteristic of this form of Church Government is, that it entrusts the duty of ruling the Church to the presbytery—that is, to the presbyters or elders of the Church in their assembled capacity. But let us bring it, as well as the others, to the Scriptural standard.

In the Apostolic Church, we have mentioned frequently already, that popular election was an admitted principle. It is so with Presbyterians. In all Presbyterian Churches throughout Britain and America, with the single exception of the Established Church of Scotland, the members of each congregation invariably elect their own office-bearers. The privilege has been sometimes abused, as what good thing has not been abused by the sin and infatuation of man? But it is a Scriptural privilege that the Apostolic Church bequeaths us, and Presbyterians have often shown that they count it more precious than gold.

In the primitive age, the office of bishop and elder was identical. An elder was not inferior, in point of official standing, to a bishop, nor a bishop to an elder. It is so in the Presbyterian Church. Every elder is a bishop, or overseer of the flock; and every bishop is an elder, one whose office is to rule in the house of God. There are two departments in the office of the elder—that of teaching, and that of ruling; but the office itself is one.

There was a plurality of elders or bishops in each congregation of the Apostolic Church. Such is the practice in every Presbyterian Church at the present day. There is in each of their congregations a number of persons ordained to the office of the eldership, one of whom at least gives himself to the work of the ministry in its various departments, particularly that of public instruction, while the others give their principal attention to ruling in the Church of God.

Teaching and ruling, as we have already stated, are different departments of the same office; and, while there can be no doubt that those appointed to the office have, in the abstract, a right to fill both departments, yet, in practice, it is found more convenient and beneficial for the people that each elder give most of his attention to that department whose duties he is best qualified to discharge. All elders, being bishops, have an equal right, according to the Scriptures, to preach, baptise, administer the Lord's Supper, and ordain; but these duties it is arranged to devolve on one of the elders, called by distinction the *minister*, who is specially trained to his work, and is, by general consent, admitted to possess most gifts and attainments, and who, in consequence, is the best qualified to make these ordinances edifying to the Church; while the majority of the elders only rule, visit the sick, superintend Sabbath-schools, conduct prayer-meetings, and make themselves useful in other ways. Presbyterians, therefore, maintain a plurality of elders in every Church; and, as it was in apostolic days, it is customary among them for elders to rule who do not labour in word and doctrine. Any unprejudiced person may see from I Tim. v. 17, that the office of the eldership divided itself into two great departments of duty in primitive times, even as at present. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." Dr. King's comment on this text must, for sense and truthfulness, commend itself to every intelligent man:—"These words," he says, "could suggest to an unbiassed reader only one meaning, that all elders who rule well are worthy of abundant honour, but especially those of their number who, besides ruling well, also labour in word and doctrine. Of course, the passage so interpreted, bears that, of the elders who rule well, only some labour in word and doctrine—that is, there are ruling elders, and among these teaching elders, as we have at the present day."* We are tempted thus to insert the true exposition of this celebrated passage, of which we have been often charged by our opponents as giving interpretations the most grotesque and extravagant. But the

* Exposition and Defence, p. 115.

reader is requested to observe that the point which we have particularly in view at present is, that the Presbyterian, like the Apostolic Church, has, in every congregation, a plurality of elders.

Office-bearers were set apart to their distinct spheres of duty in the Apostolic Church with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The Presbyterian Church, in its several branches, is the only one known to us that carries this Scriptural principle invariably into practice.

In the Apostolic Church there was recognised the privilege of appeal and the right of government. This privilege is not only admitted, but it is one of the most distinguishing principles of Presbyterianism. Should any difference arise in a congregation, the members are competent to settle the matter without appeal, if they please; but, should this fail, it is equally competent for them to refer the whole matter, either for advice or decision, to the assembly of elders met in presbytery. The highest ecclesiastical court known to the system is the *Presbytery*; the *Synod* being the name usually given to the presbytery of a province, and the *General Assembly* being the name that convenience has attached to the presbytery of a nation. The General Assembly has jurisdiction over a Synod only because it is a larger presbytery. Hence, that *subordination of Church Courts*, which some injudicious friends of Presbyterianism speak of as being a main feature of the system, is a mere accidental arrangement, which experience has proved conducive to union and strength, but which is by no means essential to the existence of the system. This is proved by the fact that a denomination, without either Synod or Assembly, and possessing no Church court whatever except a district presbytery, is, nevertheless, a complete Presbyterian body. Let there be only one assembly of elders to which a congregation can submit an appeal, and the apostolic principle is preserved. It is not even certain that *representation* is a main feature of the system, although a virtual representation is the result of existing arrangements. There is representation so far as that a few office-bearers, chosen by the people on their first admission to office, transact business for the many. Nor are

all office-bearers privileged to find admission to the higher courts ; for, although all elders are, in the abstract, equal in point of official power, and have, of course, equal right to sit in presbytery, yet, for convenience sake, it has been agreed upon that only a part of them shall at the same time exercise this right. In the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, it has been the immemorial custom, and long experience has only served to confirm its advantages, for two elders, the teaching elder or minister, and a ruling elder, to take their seats in presbytery. The result of these arrangements is, that a virtual representation occurs, and the system enjoys all its advantages ; but to say it is a main pillar of Presbyterianism is contrary, in our opinion, to the facts of the case. Were the platform of the presbytery so widened as to give every elder a seat in our Church courts, this would, in a great measure, do away with representation, and would be unwise for many reasons, but would not shake a pillar of the system. In the meantime, whatever may be thought of the principle of representation and the subordination of Church courts, there can be no doubt that the Presbyterian form of government, in common with that of the Apostolic Church, secures to the people the *right of appeal to the assembly of elders, and grants to the assembly of elders the right of government*—a privilege which, so far as known to us, is enjoyed by no denomination that is not, in point of government, Presbyterian.

In the Apostolic Church, the Lord Jesus alone was King and Head. This is a truth acknowledged by all Presbyterians, and practically acted upon by all, except a very few, who, owing to their connexion with the State, have been charged with a virtual departure from the principle. All Presbyterian Churches rank among their most cherished, as well as distinctive principles, that *Christ alone is King and Head of His Church*. As a denomination, Presbyterians have ever held that the Church, independent of the civil rulers, has supreme jurisdiction in all spiritual matters, and that its office-bearers are bound to exercise that jurisdiction in conformity to the mind of Christ, as expressed in His Word. The doctrine of the Supreme Headship of Jesus

Christ over His Church is one to which Presbyterians have always been warm in their attachment.

We find, then, on minute and patient examination, that the six main principles of government that were, by inspired men, established in the Apostolic Church, are all recognised and practically carried out among Presbyterians. We know no other denomination in the world, of whose form of ecclesiastical government the same statement could be made without departure from the truth.



The Result.

Here, then, is the result of our investigations and comparisons. The Word of God contains six great, well-defined principles of government, that were embodied in that Church which was planted and organised by the inspired apostles of the Lord. All existing modern Churches claim to be apostolic, and, with the exception of the Greek and Roman Churches, profess to adopt the Scriptures as the sole rule of faith and practice. But, on comparing the prelacy of the Church of England with the standard of the Divine Word, it is found that in that Church not one of the apostolic principles of government is recognised or embodied. Among the Independents, three of the apostolic principles are exemplified in practice; the remaining three are nowhere to be found. Among Presbyterians, these six principles are all acknowledged, and every one of them is a main feature of the Presbyterian system. We now remind the reader of the axiom with which we entered on the investigation:—*The modern Church which embodies in its government most apostolic principles, comes nearest in its government to the Apostolic Church.* We apply this axiom to the settlement of the case. Our conclusion is, that, *while the prelacy of Rome and England is in direct opposition to the form of ecclesiastical government that was sanctioned by inspired men; and while Independency approaches much more nearly, but still falls short of the primitive model, THE PRESBYTERIAN IS, IN POINT OF GOVERNMENT, THE ONLY APOSTOLIC CHURCH.*

We are, indeed, very far from maintaining that any Church on earth is *in everything* an exact model of the pattern presented in the primitive age. It requires very little thought to see that the Apostolic Church of the Scriptures is altogether unique—one that in *all its parts* is never to be realised in this world again. There were in it apostles, prophets, and apostolic delegates—all vested with extraordinary powers, which have been handed down to no successors. It was quite common for the early preachers to work miracles in confirmation of their doctrine, and confer the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands. Sometimes in the same congregation there were several gifted brethren, who could look into the future with prophetic eye and declare infallibly the mind of God. In the Church of Jerusalem, organised by the whole college of apostles, and the mother of all other churches, there was a community of goods established; and it was quite a common thing for the people of those days, when their hearts were warm with the first glow of love to the Lord Jesus, to sell their property, and lay the price of it at the apostles' feet. There were no public buildings erected for the celebration of Christian worship during all the apostolic age; and public teachers, instead of confining the labours of a life to one little district in the country, went everywhere preaching the Word. These are matters as to which no sect that we know of has been able yet to copy the Apostolic Church, or is ever very likely to do so.

Again, there are some arrangements, some of them very unimportant, interwoven with the Presbyterian system, for which it would be difficult to find precedent in the Scriptures. We have already adverted to *representation*—the practice of one or two elders representing their brother elders in our meetings of presbytery—an arrangement founded more on common sense than Scripture, and adopted to prevent any individual congregation from exercising a preponderance of influence, and to secure, as far as possible, calm deliberation and impartial sentences. Could we command in the assembly of elders the personal presence of inspired apostles to guide the brethren to a right decision, we are sure all would go well, and we might not be so solicitous as to repre-

sentation ; but, so long as humanity falls short of perfection, it is right to guard against abuses, and to impose upon the exercise of arbitrary power a salutary check. There is no plan better adapted to accomplish this, and to secure at the same time the confidence of the people, than that of representation. We have also spoken of the subordination of church courts, an arrangement entered into for giving effect to the principle of appeal, and which not only gives to the denomination unity and strength, but is obviously attended with many other advantages. The utility of both these principles is undoubted, but it were vain to say that they are essentials of Presbyterianism.

It is not uncommon to hear people speak of the advantages that accrue to the Presbyterian system from the admittance of the *lay* element into the Church courts. This must be a misunderstanding altogether. None but elders—teaching and ruling elders—are competent to sit in any Presbyterian Church court, from the session of a congregation up to the General Assembly, and, as we have already seen, all elders are equal in point of official standing, for though their departments of duty are in some respects different, yet the office is one and the same. No elder of any kind is a *layman*, but an ecclesiastical office-bearer, ordained with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, and appointed to the oversight of the flock and to the discharge of spiritual duties. Nor does an elder sit in our Church courts to represent the laity. He represents the laity in no sense different from that in which the minister represents them ; both are chosen by the people, and both fill the one office in the Church, the only difference between them being one of education, of labour, and of reward. The notion is only plausible from the fact that most elders are engaged in secular pursuits. But it should be remembered that all ministers were so engaged at the first. Even an apostle lived by his trade, as he repeatedly informs us (Acts xx. 34 ; xviii. 3 ; 1 Cor. iv. 12 ; 1 Thess. ii. 9 ; 2 Thess. iii. 8) ; and it was part of Paul's charge to the bishops of Ephesus, "that so *labouring* they ought to support the weak" (Acts xx. 35). If the pursuit of secular employments proves our elders to be

laymen, then the bishops of Ephesus were laymen, and the Apostle of the Gentiles was a layman too. It is equally in vain to argue that, as the brethren were present in the apostolic council (Acts xv. 23), the laity are entitled to be represented, and are represented by the elders in our Church courts: for, as every one knows, elders and brethren were both present in that council, and therefore the one could not represent the other—each class had a place and a function of its own. Elders sit in their own right as spiritual rulers in the house of God. There are in our Church courts no *lay* representatives and no *lay elders*—a name which ignorance invented and malevolence has preserved, in order to bring the office into contempt and disrepute.

It is, however, only candid to say that such grotesque notions of ecclesiastical order, as these terms betray, have received countenance from the disparity that in the course of time has risen between the elders who teach and the elders who rule. This disparity is not the result of any ecclesiastical enactment, but was at the beginning, and still is, the effect mainly of a difference of gifts. The most gifted of the elders was in the beginning set to preach, and what at first was only a difference of gifts has grown in the progress of time to wear the appearance of a difference of rank. One is here reminded of the truthful remark of Dr. Campbell—“Power has a sort of attractive force, which gives it a tendency to accumulate, insomuch that what in the beginning is a distinction barely perceptible, grows in process of time a most remarkable disparity.”

The disparity existing among teaching and ruling elders among Presbyterians, instead of being defended, is very much to be lamented, and ought as much as possible to be removed. This is to be done, however, not by lowering the teaching elder, but by elevating the ruling elder, and appointing to office those only who are distinguished from the people by more than a common measure of graces and gifts, who are aware of the responsibilities of the eldership, and who are determined, for the Lord's sake, to the best of their ability to discharge its duties. Besides, the office of the deacon, existing at present only in some congregations,

should be revived in every Church, where elders can manage temporal matters only by neglecting the spiritual concerns peculiarly their own. These and other defects can be remedied, when once they are seen to be defects; for it is one among the many recommendations of the Presbyterian Church polity, that it possesses within itself a purifying and reforming power, by which, while always preserving the Scriptural and essential principles of the system, it can alter any arrangement that experience has proved in its practical operation not to be productive of good.

We do not, then, assert that the Presbyterian Church is in everything an exact copy of the Apostolic Church. There are some things found in the one that must be for ever wanting in the other; and conversely, there are some things wanting in the one that are found in the other. But in doctrine they are exactly the same: in worship they are exactly the same: in government, all the main principles of the one are found in the other. There is no other Church on earth of which the same statements can be made in truth. We regard it, therefore, as put beyond all reasonable doubt, *that of all the Churches now existing in the world, the Presbyterian Church comes nearest to the model of apostolic times.* That such is the fact, every man, who gives to the evidence here submitted that careful and unprejudiced consideration to which it is entitled, must, as we think, be convinced.





PRACTICAL LESSONS.

THE apostolic principles of Church government are the peculiarities of the Presbyterian system. That other Churches neither practise nor acknowledge these principles, is the main ground why Presbyterians remain separate from them. I know of no good reason for my being a Presbyterian rather than an Independent, except that I believe Presbyterianism has done what the rival system has failed to do—preserved the principles of apostolic government; and, for this reason, possesses an amount of Scriptural warrant (not to speak of unity, coherence, and vigour), that Independency can never have. The absence of these apostolic principles in the Prelatic Establishment must always keep enlightened and conscientious Presbyterians out of its pale, no matter what be the modifications introduced into its articles, or what change be wrought upon its ritual. If our distinctive principles are not apostolic and important, Presbyterianism is not only folly, but very great folly; and, by standing apart from other denominations upon such a ground, we only perpetuate needless divisions in the Church of God. If we discover that the peculiarities of the system are either not true, or truths of minor consequence, we should take speedy steps to heal the schism that exists, and exemplify Christian union on a large scale by uniting with some sister sect, whose principles are more Scriptural and important than our own. But if, on the other hand, our distinctive principles are very important as well as true, then duty to God and the Church demands that we avow, illustrate, and defend them, and press them on the notice of the world.

In discharging either of these duties, Presbyterians at present seem rather remiss. As a denomination we show no desire to renounce our distinctive principles, and merge into

Prelacy or Independency; nor, on the other hand, do we make such efforts to teach and propagate them as the truth has a right to expect at our hands. By deriving the name and character of our ecclesiastical system from these principles, we seem to tell the world that they are of very great importance; by our habitual reserve on this topic in our pulpit ministrations, we seem to say that they are of very little. Our conduct is in this respect ambiguous and vacillating. We construct with the one hand, and demolish with the other. On the ground of certain principles we keep apart from other sects; and yet to teach these principles from the pulpit is usually viewed as an intrusion inconsistent with the Gospel. Our separate existence as a Church clothes our peculiarities with consequence; our habitual forgetfulness of impressing them upon the people, deepens, if it does not produce, the popular notion that they are of no consequence whatever.

That expositions of our principles are very rarely delivered from the pulpit, is a fact that few acquainted with the circumstances of the case will venture to deny. I sat myself for years in various Presbyterian Churches of town and country; I never failed to hear the Gospel of Christ, and the great precepts of Christian morality preached by our ministers, and enforced always with great faithfulness, and sometimes with considerable power; but I do not remember to have ever heard on any occasion, except at the settlement of a minister, any attempt made to teach the people why they should be Presbyterians and not Prelatists—and yet I never worshipped where there was not a parish church within a distance of two miles. I have met with not a few others, who tell me they have sat all their lives in Presbyterian Churches, and do not remember to have heard on any Sabbath a single principle of Presbyterian Church polity stated and explained. The “Plea of Presbytery”—one of the very ablest defences of Apostolic Church government and worship that the present century has produced, testifies to the singular fact of the silence of the pulpit on our distinctive principles. In the preface to their volume, the authors of that work make the following observations:—“Can he

[Mr. Boyd] point to a single Presbyterian minister *in Ulster*, who had previously addressed a congregation for four successive Sabbaths on the peculiarities of Presbyterianism? Can he name a Presbyterian minister who had previously employed a single Sabbath in the discussion of the subject? *We are satisfied that he cannot plead even one such case as an apology for his agitation of the controversy.*" To all this there may be some honourable exceptions; but still it cannot be fairly denied that the exposition of our Church polity has, in general, become unfashionable and unusual. Even at ordinations, the explanation of our principles is beginning to be felt as a periodical encumbrance—inconsistent with the liberality of modern times—which immemorial custom has entailed upon us; and good easy people, who wish, at any price, to stand well with their neighbours, and fear to give offence by telling honest truth, desire to have the discourse on Presbyterianism, customary on such occasions, either entirely abolished, or, what amounts to the same thing, so softened down as to please everybody. And from the press an exposition of Presbyterian principles rarely issues, except when some champion of another sect, animated by our apathy, is brave enough to attack our system; and then some Presbyterian warrior, clad in the panoply of battle, descends into the field of controversy; but before he strikes a blow, he takes care to apologise for his intrusion upon the public, by alleging that he appears in self-defence—which is much the same as saying that he would not have troubled the world by telling it the truth had he not been provoked by the occasion. This candid avowal prepares the reader, at the very commencement, to regard the warmth of the writer's zeal as only an ebullition of personal resentment, and the keenest thrusts of his logic as only the envenomed stings of sectarian retaliation.

The causes of this guilty silence are manifold. I do not believe that we are ashamed of our Presbyterianism, and yet it seems very much as if it were so. The fact, however, is, that some ministers never have had their attention particularly directed to the vast importance of making their people familiar with the grounds on which Presbyterians stand sepa-

rate from other Christians ; and a knowledge of which every reflecting mind must see is so necessary to produce consistency of conduct, and to perpetuate our denominational existence. Others keep silent, because to betray strong attachment to Presbyterian principles seems bigoted and uncharitable, and interferes too rudely with the evangelical heresy so popular in our day—that all forms of the Protestant religion are equally true and equally deserving the support and encouragement of Christians. But the main cause of the silence of the pulpit on the subject is the impression so prevalent among the ministry, that our distinctive principles are so clearly written in the Scriptures as to be evident to all, and that, therefore, the public advocacy of Presbyterianism is unnecessary. This, I am persuaded, is a clerical delusion, gross and gigantic. Presbyterian principles are, indeed, clearly embodied in the Bible, but we are not to forget that what is very clear to one man may be very dark to another. The popular mind, so acute in the business of every-day life, is but a dull learner in the things of God, and at every step needs help and guidance, in order that it may reach right views on spiritual matters. Clearly as Presbyterianism is written in the Scriptures, I consider the Gospel to be written there still more clearly ; and yet it is no uncommon thing to meet people familiar with the sound of the Bible from childhood, and clergymen whose business is to preach it, and authors who have attempted to instruct the world on religion, who are all alike ignorant of the main principles of the Gospel of Christ. As it would not be wise for the Preacher of the Cross to leave the multitude to discover in the Bible the Gospel for themselves, so it is not wise to leave them without assistance in their search for Presbyterianism. One a very little more advanced in knowledge than ourselves can, in a few minutes, show us meaning in a passage of Scripture that we never saw in it before, and can leave us wondering why we read it so often, and never viewed it till that moment in a light so beautiful and true. Besides, it seems clear that, if Church Government is a portion of the revealed will of God, duty demands that from every faithful minister it should receive, in the pre-

lections of the pulpit, a place proportioned to its importance. There is peculiar need, moreover, that, in this department, the people should receive the assistance of the minister; for, in dealing with the apostolic system, there is an amount of labour in the collection of passages, in the comparison of facts, and in the deduction of inferences, that few minds, left to their own unaided efforts, are zealous enough to engage, and vigorous enough to accomplish. And whose duty is it to supply help, if not his, who is called by the Holy Ghost, and chosen by the voice of the people, to labour in word and doctrine? "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth."

Whatever be the cause of the silence of the pulpit on the distinctive principles of the Presbyterian system, the sad results of it are manifest every day. The intelligent few who have attained to some acquaintance with our principles, have derived their knowledge from the Bible and from books, very seldom from the pulpit; while the many, being uninformed on such subjects, act sometimes in open violation of them. Multitudes frequent the meeting-house, because they have been accustomed to do so from childhood, not because they have ever thought of the peculiar principles of the Presbyterian system, and from an examination of the Word of God are satisfied of their truth. They are Presbyterians by birth and habit only, very seldom by conviction. Not being systematically taught that the principles of government operating in their own Church are exclusively apostolic, many of the Presbyterian people appear to regard all Protestant Churches as standing upon the same level of truth; they do not trouble themselves with forms of faith; in their view the Westminster Confession and the Thirty-nine Articles are only fac-similes of each other; Prelacy, Independency, and Presbytery are all alike to them—it is only bigotry that pretends to see a difference. Opinions of this sort are now so common that no odium attaches to their profession, and are vastly popular, especially with rich Presbyterians, who ape at fashion, and meditate at some early day renegadism to the Establishment. Nor is it very wonderful that many others, untaught to consider Presbyterian principles as a portion of

Divine revelation, and surrounded by many circumstances tending to deepen the impression that all forms of the Protestant faith are equally Scriptural, are kept in the Church only by the force of habit, or personal attachment to some worthy minister, and are ready to fling the nominal profession of apostolic principles away from them, so soon as the time comes that a secession from the Presbyterian Church can advance their worldly interests, please their superiors, feed their revenge, or gratify a whim.

There can be little doubt that ignorance of the Scriptural truth and practical value of our principles, has made the Presbyterian community much colder to their own Church than otherwise they would be. I have often remarked how a Roman Catholic, a Methodist, a Baptist—each thinks his own Church the purest and best in the world; while a Presbyterian is usually a man who regards any other Protestant Church as being at the very least as good as his own. It is this popular persuasion that in Ulster lends proselytism all its power. Some of the smaller sects endeavour to diffuse the impression that the differences between Protestant Churches are of no consequence, and it is their interest to do so; they have little to lose and much to gain by such an impression being abroad. Every minister among them who knows his business is, of course, a vigorous, and doubtless a conscientious supporter of the Evangelical Alliance. The prelatial clergy also, except in some rare case, do their best to diffuse the same feeling among Dissenters, because it gives them freer access to convey their Puseyism into Presbyterian families; and because, being wise in their generation, they have the sagacity to see that, when the Presbyterian mind becomes saturated with the feeling, that there is no difference between the two Churches, the question will soon follow—Why tax ourselves for nothing; why be at the expense of supporting a separate Church; why not join the Establishment? If proselytism gives us any annoyance, we have none but ourselves to blame. Were we faithful to our own principles, the people would be faithful to us. The prevalent indifference to Presbyterianism that our defective instruction has produced, has left us open to the incursions of every sect

that chooses to give us opposition, and which, in so doing, may always safely reckon on the countenance and co-operation of some of ourselves. It has turned the Presbyterian Church of Ireland into a sort of ecclesiastical preserve, where foot of Papist dare not trespass, but where every marksman, who wears the mask of Protestantism, is free to sport at pleasure and to bag his game. Let the blame be all our own, if the thoughtless among our people are, from time to time, taken in the snare of the fowler.

Instead, however, of pouring forth unavailing regrets over past deficiencies, perhaps it were well for all of us to consider the most likely expedient for communicating a new and better tone to the Presbyterian mind. This the ministry have it in their power to do the very moment that they *will* it. The clergy of no other denomination are able to wield over intelligent society an influence equal to ours. The General Assembly comprises the assembled ministers of the kingdom, and a great master mind, taking advantage of his position in the house to write some great truths on the hearts of his audience, can give an impulse to a principle that is felt to the very extremities of the nation. Like the sons of youth, each auditor there is an arrow in the hands of a mighty man. The sentiments and principles there enunciated are conveyed by each minister to his respective sphere of labour; and in his hands sentiment becomes embodied in action. Scattered at due intervals over all parts of the kingdom, our ministers are each the centre of a circle peculiarly his own; they come into contact with society at all points, from the highest to the lowest in the scale of intelligence; they address the people publicly at least once or twice a-week the whole year round, and they go forth to hold private intercourse with every family at its own fireside; they take part in public meetings, preside over the education of youth, contribute to newspapers and magazines, and have access, in many other different ways, to the intellects and hearts of the people. It is needless to add that this gives us vast influence for good or for evil. We have it in our power to mould the opinions of our own community, and to make deep impression on society beyond. We have only to be unanimous for

a principle, and advocate it with enthusiasm, in order to fasten that principle very deeply in the intellect of the kingdom. There is as much mind in the Presbyterian ministry at this moment as, if wisely directed, could revolutionise the religious sentiment of the nation.

Premising these things, it is obvious we have only to enter vigorously on a new line of action, in order to turn the tide of popular feeling completely in favour of Presbyterianism. It is never to be forgotten that, as ministers of the Gospel, there is deposited in our hands a very important trust. The duties of this trust are best discharged by each man striving to cultivate, to the utmost extent possible, that portion of the vineyard committed to his individual care. Zeal in other matters never can make up for deficiency in this. Let our ministers continue, as at present, to preach the Gospel faithfully, and to maintain that soundness in the faith, without which there can be no religious prosperity. Let them continue to exemplify in their own life and character that pure morality which they inculcate upon others. Let them redouble, if it be possible to redouble, their attention to the people, and spare no pains to carry the message of life to every fireside. Let them visit the sick, comfort them that mourn, instruct the ignorant, sympathise with the poor and oppressed, encourage missions, and lend a helping hand to every scheme that has for its object the promotion of benevolence and virtue. Let them, in everything, study to show themselves approved unto God—workmen that need not to be ashamed. But let them be assured that they neither serve the Church nor serve themselves, if they do not, by pulpit exposition and private instruction, use their efforts to engrave deeply on the minds of the people the distinctive principles of the Presbyterian system. I am far from saying that these things should be substituted for the Gospel of Christ; but, as we believe they form an integral portion of Divine revelation, it is our duty, as faithful ministers of Christ, to teach them to the people. I do not mean that any denomination should be systematically assailed in a bitter and an unchristian spirit; but it seems to me that, if a preacher only prophesy smooth things, preach only what

he considers palatable to his audience, spare errors that are abroad in the community working much evil, and purposely keep back any portion of the truth for fear of being pronounced sectarian and uncharitable, he ceases to be the minister of God, and becomes the servant of man. So long as we stand separate from the Establishment, it is no less our interest than our duty to make the Presbyterian people thoroughly acquainted with our reasons for maintaining and perpetuating a distinct ecclesiastical existence. Let our dissent rest upon the intelligence, not upon the ignorance, of the people; and instantly it becomes rational and consistent, and of course more formidable than ever. Personal attachment to a minister is a tie too weak to bind a people to the Church; for death or a removal may snap it asunder any day. The bonds of custom, kindred, and early association, though in some instances powerful enough, are not too strong to be broken, as experience often shows. It remains that we teach our congregations that our principles, forming, as they do, a portion of the Word of God, should be to all God's people, precious as gold. We should instruct them periodically as to what Presbyterianism is. Let each minister do this as mildly as he pleases, but let it be done faithfully and firmly. Let him not be turned from his purpose by the murmurs of disaffected parties within, or the clamours of enemies without, remembering that the patient cries most loudly when the physician probes the sore. Let him leave no man in doubt that he himself believes the principles of which he is the public representative, and that they are very dear to his heart. Let him take no steps tending to spread the popular error that our distinctive principles are trifles. While careful not to oppose other Christians who aim to advance the glory of God in their own way, he should neither aid nor encourage persons who systematically repudiate what we regard as great and important truths. And let him not fear to be called a bigot, for what is a *bigot* but the bad name which the world gives a man who ventures to have principles, and is firm enough to show through life a consistent attachment to them? In a word, the aim of all of us should be to make every

man who is a Presbyterian by name a Presbyterian by conviction.

The lukewarm and odious indifference to Presbyterian principles that in this day meets one everywhere, calls loudly for a remedy of some kind. The best I know is from the text-book of the Divine Word to teach the people publicly and privately what Presbyterianism really is. Had we entered into one vast conspiracy to let our principles die out of the memory of the world, we could not adopt any course more likely to accomplish our end than never to breathe them from the pulpit. But if we wish the people to know and value them, it is very plain we must show that we know and value them ourselves. If we would drive any principles into the popular mind, and make them as "nails fastened by the master of assemblies," we must never cease to hammer at them. Sentiments perpetually falling from the pulpit, the platform, and the press, cannot, in the course of nature, for ever fall pointless to the earth; they may at first be disliked by not a few, but they will modify the views even of persons whose judgments have already attained maturity—they will fasten with the greatest tenacity on young minds opening to thought—they will spread abroad in ever-enlarging circles—they will grow to be public opinion at the last. The pulpit is the proper sphere for the promulgation of religious truth. Error needs no effort to spread it through the world, even as the seeds of nature, carried by the autumn wind, are sown broadcast over the land, and germinate in the soil without the culture of the husbandman; but truth rarely goes forth alone—the human heart has no natural affection for it—ignorance and prejudice obstruct its progress at every step—it requires an impulsive force to carry it through the world. Weeds grow of themselves, but the flower requires all the skill and care that the gardener can give it. Error sprouts rankly in human bosoms without any help of ours; but truth needs some kind hand to plant and water it, and keep it in the sunshine. Religious truth, of all others, presents least charms to the natural mind—and how truth of this nature can be expected to make its way through such a world as ours, without receiving an impetus from the

pulpit, I do not know—I cannot even imagine. It is certain that a man who, at the proper time and place, states and illustrates his principles, and satisfies others that he believes and prizes them himself, is sure, sooner or later, to make converts to his views; but a man who is known to profess opinions, and is always silent on them, raises doubts as to his own sincerity, and never makes one.

If we wish to have Presbyterianism the religion of the Church universal, we must let the world know that we cherish a warm and devoted attachment to its principles. We should not halt between two opinions, clinging to one sect and giving our influence to another. We should cease to be a lukewarm and hybrid generation—Presbyterians only in name. This is not a time for inconsistency and doubt—but for decision, for energy, for action. Presbyterianism should be on the move. Every hour we delay to enter on some vigorous course of policy, our interests, as a denomination, suffer. In our circumstances, hesitation and inaction are fraught with danger, if not denominational death. Every pulpit we can command in the kingdom should strike instantly to a high Presbyterian key. If, as a denomination, we would be faithful to the truth of God; if we would have the people to understand and to love our system; if we would marshal public opinion against renegadism, and hold it up to contumely and scorn; if we would push our Presbyterianism, and call the attention of our fellow-Christians to its Scripturality and its vigour; if we would have our friends to follow, and our enemies to fear us—then we should learn to regard our distinctive principles as our pride and glory, and preach and teach them, till the people know them like the alphabet, and an unwilling world be compelled to listen. The Church that forgets to assert and teach her peculiar principles lives in such a world as this only by sufferance; her own children are cold to her; and, when she sinks to dust, she shall have few to lament her fall. But the Church that thunders its opinions in the ears of mankind, and which neither force nor flattery can silence, is a Church that will have many bitter enemies, but many warm friends—it will have many to hate, but it will have some to love, and some

to die for it—it may be everywhere spoken against, but, faithful to the truth of God, it will have saints and martyrs, and, in due time, bring the world to its feet.

A word, in conclusion, to the Presbyterian people. This little book is sent to the world principally on your account, that you may know the Scriptural grounds on which the Presbyterian form of Church Government rests, and how its claims to apostolicity are so far superior to those of any rival system. I, at first, engaged in the study of the subject for my own personal profit and satisfaction, it afterwards occurred to me that a line of argument, which to me seems so clear and convincing, might be serviceable to others, who are anxious, as I was, to know the mind of Christ on this much controverted subject. I entered on the investigation with considerable misgivings, lest it should turn out that the system of ecclesiastical government with which I am connected is not divine in its origin. These misgivings were mainly produced by the plausible representations and confident assertions of Independent writers; and I do acknowledge that, had I given ear to their bravadoes, without consulting the Scriptures for myself, I must have ceased to be a Presbyterian. But with me it has ever been a principle to call no man *master*, and to take my opinions on religious matters from the Word of God alone. I sought light from the Fountain of Light. I asked the guidance of the Divine Spirit. I went directly to the Word of God, compared one passage with another, and endeavoured to arrive at apostolic principles. I brought the existing systems of Church Government into juxtaposition with the Bible, and examined them in the light that shines from the Lamp of God. Lest any important passage of Scripture, or any weighty argument might escape my notice, I read some of the most plausible attacks ever made on Presbytery, and I have studied Prelacy and Independency as presented in the pages of the very ablest of their advocates. The result is, that I am persuaded Prelacy is a human system altogether—from top to bottom a fabric constructed by men. I am satisfied that Independency, in so far as it differs from Presbyterianism, is not so erroneous as it is defective; and that it stands in need

of some one to "set in order the things that are wanting." I am, also, fully convinced that the Presbyterian form of Church Government approaches more closely than any other to that which existed in the Apostolic Church. To do full justice to all the arguments that might be advanced in favour of this system of ecclesiastical polity, would require a large book; but, as large books are often written but seldom read, I thought it better to go directly to the root of the matter, present you with the Scriptural view of the subject, and enable you to judge for yourselves. I have throughout studied to be brief, that you may have time to read, and plain, that the very humblest of you may understand. I have purposely shunned all elaborate discussion and intricate argumentation, and have tried to present you with facts from the Word of God bearing on the case—leading the reader by the hand to that pure fountain, and permitting him to draw water for himself. I now invite you to view in all its parts the evidence here submitted; examine if I have misquoted a text, falsified a fact, distorted a testimony, or taken the Scriptures in any other than their plain and natural sense; put the reasoning here presented to the very severest test that in fairness and honesty you can apply; give the statements of the Divine Word the weight to which they are justly entitled, and I am confident you will come to think with me that all the apostolic principles of ecclesiastical government are found in the Presbyterian Church alone. It is something to you, surely, to have good reasons for knowing that that Church, with whose ordinances the thoughts of your childhood are entwined—within whose temples beloved friends, now in heaven, learned the way of salvation, and were taught the lessons of life—and whose psalms and services are fragrant with the memory of martyrs, is, in its government, no less than its doctrine and worship, founded on, and agreeable to, the Word of God. Satisfied of this, it is your duty through life to give it a cordial and consistent support, to attend upon its sanctuaries, receive its lessons, and take your part in the various departments of usefulness which it presents. There is such a thing as being a Presbyterian without being a Christian, as it is possible to be a

Christian without being a Presbyterian. Depend upon it, it is best to be both. Make the atonement of Christ the refuge of your souls; hold fast by every truth of God's Word, small and great; lend no encouragement to opposing errors; take no pains to conceal your attachment to Presbyterian principles; and strive to do honour to the system with which you claim connexion, by your love to Christ, by an upright and consistent life, and by earnest endeavours on your part to deserve the character which distinguished the saints of God in other and better days—"a peculiar people, zealous of good works."



SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM.



REV. T. WITHEROW.

MARCUS WARD & Co., ROYAL ULSTER WORKS.

Scriptural Baptism

ITS

MODE & SUBJECTS

AS OPPOSED TO THE VIEWS OF

THE ANABAPTISTS

BY THE

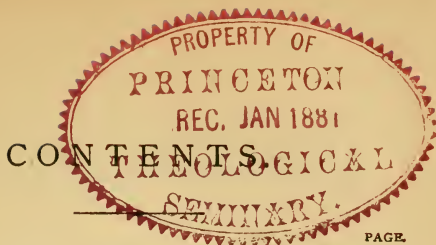
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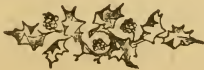


TO THE READER.



THIS little work is, under a new title, the substance of three Tracts which were published in 1859-60, during the Revival in Ulster. Everything of a local and personal nature has now been omitted; and a few other things also, which I could wish to have retained, but which brevity has induced me to sacrifice. The tract on MODE was very hurriedly got up, having been originally written in a single day, to meet an exigency of that time. It has been now re-arranged, and, to some extent, re-written.

It is humbly hoped that, in its new form, this little Book on Baptism will be more worthy of general acceptance.





Scriptural Baptism

ITS

MODE AND SUBJECTS.

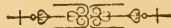
INTRODUCTORY.

SALVATION comes to us from God. His eternal purpose in regard to it is carried into execution by His Son and by His Spirit. The great work of the Son is to make atonement for sin by His death; the great work of the Spirit is to produce within us a new nature. From the one we receive our title to heaven, from the other our meetness for heaven. By faith in Christ we are justified; by the grace of the Spirit we are sanctified. The work of each is equally necessary to the eternal happiness of men. The same Bible that says, "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life," also expressly teaches that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It is a striking evidence of God's care for the best interests of His people, that He has adopted means, under both Dispensations, for keeping prominently before the minds of men truths so indispensable to salvation. He has appointed in His Church ordinances to be symbols of the greatest facts in human redemption. The work of the Son was represented to God's people in ancient times by the Lamb of the Passover, which was an emblem of "Christ our Passover sacri-

ficed for us:" but it is represented to us by the Lord's Supper, with regard to which it is testified that, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The symbol of the Passover has now given way to the symbol of the Supper; but the great truth embodied in both ordinances—redemption by the blood of Christ—is always the same. In like manner, the work of the Spirit was of old shadowed forth in the rite of circumcision—the emblem of purification—a symbolical action that represented the sanctifying effects of grace upon the heart; but it is exhibited to us in the ordinance of Baptism, which is a symbolical action that figures forth the removal of sin. The symbol of circumcision has retired to make way for the symbol of baptism; but the great truth embodied in them both—the sanctification of the Holy Ghost—is ever the same. The two symbolic ordinances of the Gospel Dispensation thus serve an important end in the economy of grace. By visible emblems they speak great truths to the eye. The Supper presents the work of Christ; Baptism presents the work of the Spirit. God says to us through the one, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" but He says to us in the other, "Wash you, make you clean; Turn you at my reproof; Behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you."

The ordinance of Baptism is a question on which great diversity of opinion prevails throughout the Church of God. It is generally agreed that the proper element to be used is water, and that the rite is to be administered in the name of the Trinity. Different opinions, however, are entertained in reference to other departments of the subject, any one of which would open up an interesting field for inquiry. Two of these topics it is our design to examine at present. We propose to discuss the *Mode of Baptism*, and the *Subjects of Baptism*, and to gather from the Word of God, as best we can, what it teaches on these matters.





THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

THE opinion held by Anabaptists on this subject is that, "Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of the ordinance;" that, in fact, dipping is so essential to baptism, that every person undipped is, in reality, unbaptised. This notion is simple and intelligible enough, but *is it true?*

I. *Difficulties connected with Dipping.*

The Anabaptist opinion implies, of course, that every instance of baptism mentioned in Scripture was a case of immersion. But the very statement of such a thing suggests to every intelligent man a host of difficulties, which, though not of themselves, perhaps, sufficient to disprove immersion, are strong enough to raise grave doubts whether it was practised by the Apostles of Christ, or made binding on future generations. Of these difficulties, the following are a specimen:—

1. We know from Acts ii. 41, that three thousand persons were, on the day of Pentecost, baptized at Jerusalem. The difficulty that strikes every mind that has acquaintance with the place is, Where was the water found to dip such a multitude? No river passes the city; the nearest lake is many miles away; the brook Cedron is the dry bed of a little stream which only flows in the winter months; only three wells are known to exist in or around the city, in two of which the water in summer—the time at which Pentecost always occurs—is more than sixty feet under ground, and the third is only a little stream trickling from a rock, and lost in

the nearest garden : and during all the summer months the inhabitants depend on the rain water of the previous winter, carefully kept in cisterns for public accommodation, or in tanks under the houses, up out of which the water required for domestic purposes is drawn by a bucket and a wheel. In such circumstances, one cannot help asking, *Where were these three thousand people dipped?*

2. The numbers that came to John's baptism constitute another well-known difficulty. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan." Reckoning the population of the district at a million, which, by the best accounts, is too low a figure, and supposing that only one-third of these came out for baptism (and less could scarcely be supposed in accordance with the general terms employed), then it would have taken John three years and a half to have dipped one-third of the population, allowing him to baptize one person every two minutes, and to work ten hours a day! Yet John's ministry, as all agree, did not continue over six months; and it is not in evidence that he, like his Master, had any assistants in his work. If, in so short a time, John dipped Jerusalem and all the region round about Jordan, he must have lived in the water more than half his time. Against no form of baptism except immersion does this difficulty hold. One could, in the time specified, sprinkle a much greater multitude with ease. If one man dipped 300,000 in six months, would the Anabaptist kindly tell us *how it was done?*

3. Dipping in the presence of a multitude implies an exposure of the person, from which many, especially modest and delicate females, shrink, and often live undipped for years rather than encounter. Yet how strange it seems that at John's baptism no one seems to have felt surprised at the novel rite; none objected to it; none hesitated; none, so far as we know, lingered on year after year without being able to summon up courage to submit to the rite. Either human nature is very different now from what it was then, or else John's baptism was not dipping.

4. Immersion is a mode of baptism ill-suited to a universal

religion. In a tropical climate, where water is scarce, a man might live half a lifetime without seeing as much water in one place as would be sufficient to dip a man; in a polar region, where for more than half the year ice and snow are everywhere around, dipping would be almost impossible; while, again, there are many constitutions so delicate and tender, that to them dipping would be death. Some are known to have had their health seriously impaired, and their lives endangered, by submitting to this form of the ordinance. On the contrary, there is no place where a human being dwells that the washing of water is not possible, and in no circumstances is it ever unsafe. We conclude, therefore, that dipping is not the mode of baptism best adapted to a universal religion, such as Christianity was designed to be.

These difficulties may not be strong enough to disprove immersion, and must, of course, give way, if clear and convincing evidence be forthcoming on its behalf; but, taken together, they are serious enough to raise doubts about the matter, and to make us look very sharply at the arguments produced in favour of the Anabaptist opinion.



II. *Dipping not proved by the Scriptures.*

Five arguments have been advanced in favour of the doctrine that immersion is essential to baptism, which we take in their natural order:—

I. MEANING OF THE WORD βαπτίζω (*baptizo*). It is alleged by the Anabaptists that the meaning of this word is *to dip, and nothing but to dip*, and that the word carries this signification with it from the classics into the New Testament.

For sake of argument, we shall suppose it proved that this is the sense of the word in every occurrence. Then, says the Anabaptist, literal compliance with the meaning of the word is essential—to apply water in the form of pouring or sprinkling is not the ordinance. Now, apply this reasoning to the sister ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and see how it looks. The word *supper* means a *full meal*, and a *meal taken at*

night. Not only so, but the only detailed accounts of its administration in the Bible show it was observed in the evening. It was instituted on the night when Christ was betrayed, and the sermon that Paul preached on the occasion of its celebration at Troas lasted till midnight. Are we to say, then, that because the word supper means a full meal taken in the evening, that a *small quantity* of bread and wine taken *in the morning* is not the ordinance, and that to call it in such circumstances a *supper* is a burlesque on a divine institution? Did not the very fact that Christ appointed the ordinance *after* the *Paschal Supper*, show that the Lord's *Supper* was never intended to be a full meal, and that, therefore, literal compliance with all expressed in the word *supper* is not essential. Are not all professing Christians, as shown by their practice, unanimous that in observing the ordinance it is not necessary to comply with all that the word *supper* means? Now, *if the literal meaning of the word is not to regulate our observance of the Supper, why should it regulate our observance of Baptism?*

Throughout both ordinances we, at least, act consistently. The design of the Lord's Supper is to exhibit in a symbol the great work of the Lord Jesus: the design of baptism is to exhibit in a symbol the great work of the Holy Spirit in purifying the soul from the filth of sin. Now, as any amount of bread and wine, however small, is enough to figure forth the body and the blood of the Redeemer, so any amount of water, however small, is enough to figure forth the Spirit's cleansing power. The atonement that brings life to the dying sinner is as evidently seen in that piece of bread and drop of wine that we use in the ordinance, as if all the bread in the bakery and all the wine in the cellar were set upon the table; and sanctification, the work of the Holy Ghost upon our polluted nature, is as evidently seen in that handful of water poured on the face of a believer or his child, as if either of them was plunged beneath the Atlantic ocean. We act consistently in each case, never losing sight of the design of each ordinance in our administration of it. But the Anabaptist acts without any consistency whatever. Baptism, he thinks, means dipping, and therefore without dipping there

is, in his view, no baptism; but supper, he knows, means an evening meal, nevertheless, he thinks there is no necessity to observe it in the evening, or make a meal of it at all. In the one ordinance, the literal meaning of the word *is* to be carried out; in the other, the literal meaning of the word is *not* to be carried out: in the one, mode with him is everything; in the other, mode is nothing.

But do I grant that *baptizo* means nothing but to dip? Though I have argued on this supposition, *I grant no such thing*. On the contrary, it has been repeatedly shown that the word *baptizo* has not one meaning only, but *two* in classical writers. It means, first, *to put an object into an element or liquid*; and, taken in this sense, it is a synonym for *dip* or *immerse*, as is admitted on all sides. It means, also, *to put an element or liquid on or over an object*. Our own Dr. Wilson, in common with many others, has proved this secondary sense by the clearest and most convincing examples out of the Greek classics; and those who deny this meaning have no means of escaping from the proof, except by taking refuge in the thicket of figure, which is often a place of convenient retreat for those who find it more easy to evade than to answer an argument.

Two meanings, therefore, being proved in the classic writers, the question arises, which of these meanings does the word retain in the Greek of the New Testament? Does it retain but one, or does it retain them both? It is, of course, well known that in the New Testament we have the Greek language applied to subjects which Pagan writers never dreamed of, and new ideas are expressed, sometimes, indeed, by new words found nowhere else, but far more frequently by the enlargement or limitation of terms already in use. We are not, therefore, warranted to assume that either of the two significations of *baptizo*, which are found in the classics, necessarily attaches to the word in the New Testament, except *it is first proved clearly that the inspired writers actually use it in this sense*. Now, this we are prepared to do for the *secondary* meaning of the word—to produce, at least, one clear case where there was baptism but no immersion. The Apostles at Pentecost were baptized with

the Holy Ghost, but were not dipped into Him. The sound as of a mighty wind filled the house, but it was with the Holy Ghost, not with the sound, that they were baptized. The spiritual element, as will be shown more at length hereafter, *was shed forth, fell, and came upon* the persons of the Apostles, and, *in consequence of this*, they are said to have been *baptized* with the Holy Ghost. The action expressed by the word here is the putting of the element *upon* the person. Here, then, is our proof that the secondary meaning of the word is carried from the classics into the New Testament. This being proved, we are now entitled to assume that the word in Scripture is *everywhere* used in the same sense, except that *one case equally clear can be produced of a baptism where there must have been immersion*. Till this is proved, the meaning of the word in Scripture is not immersion in a single case. But if one instance from Scripture can be produced where the word *must* mean *immersion*, then we have in proof *two* Scriptural meanings competing with each other, between which nothing but the context can decide. This one instance we maintain no Anabaptist ever has produced, or ever can. Here, then, is how the case stands. Two meanings of the word *baptize* are found in classic writers: of these, one alone is proved to attach to the word in the New Testament, and **THAT ONE IS NOT IMMERSION**.

It is told of one of the great soldiers of antiquity that, when he could not untie the knot, he drew his sword and cut it. The American Anabaptists have lately performed a similar act of valour. They have made a new version of the Scripture, and where the word *baptize* occurs in the English Bible, they strike it out and insert the word *immerse*. Such a fact is instructive. They feel that the Bible is not upon their side, else there would be no necessity to mend it. The *dipping* theory must be hard pressed when, in order to maintain it, it is found needful to lay an unholy hand on the Book of God. Uzzah would not have dared to touch the ark, had it not been to avert what seemed to him a great calamity. Dipping is in danger, when men have to tamper with the Bible in order to prove it.

2. THE PRACTICE OF JOHN. We are informed in Matt.

iii. 6, how the people "were baptized of him in Jordan," and also in John iii. 23, that he was "baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there." It is alleged that this fact furnishes a strong presumption that dipping was the mode of John's baptism.

It is but fair to say that the presumption would be strong, if this was the only information given in Scripture regarding the *place* of baptism. But it will be found, on examination, that to baptize where there is "much water" was the exception, not the rule. In Acts ii. 41, we find three thousand were baptized in a single day at Jerusalem, where there is no lake, no river, and, during the summer, "much water" of no kind. The citizens of Samaria were baptized (Acts viii. 12), although it does not appear that that city had an abundance of water. The eunuch was baptized in a desert (Acts viii. 26); and, so far as appears from the narrative, Saul of Tarsus had not to leave his lodgings in order to be baptized (Acts ix. 18). The jailer and his family were baptized at midnight in a prison (Acts xvi. 33). With such facts before us, on what side does the presumption lie? Not on the side of dipping, for, confessedly, it requires abundance of water; but on the side of pouring or sprinkling, because it is possible anywhere. In a river, a fountain, a city of persecutors, in a desert, in a prison, or in a private house, it is possible to baptize by putting water upon the person. We never read of the Apostles going forth in quest of water: with them the means for performing baptism is always at hand.

If John baptized in Jordan and in Ænon, there is a reason for it. No house could accommodate the multitude that flocked to hear him. He preached in the open air, and, this being the case, he might as well preach by the river side as anywhere else. In a country so badly watered, it is as serious an offence to trespass on a man's wells as it would be in this country to make free with his orchard, and even when the country was much less populous, interference with wells was a frequent cause of strife (Gen. xxvi. 17-33). John avoided this, and chose a place where there was abundance of water. Water was needed for his baptism, let him administer the rite as he pleased; water was needed for the

crowds of people who, under that hot sun, thronged to hear him, and many of whom, we must believe, left home but ill-provided; water was needed for the beasts of burden that many would bring with them. The Baptist interfered with no man's rights, and he consulted for the comfort of his hearers when he preached and baptized by the river side. But, to infer from that circumstance that he must of necessity have dipped the people, is to draw upon the imagination.

Let it be remembered that the argument for dipping from the practice of John is a mere inference. But the inference is set aside the moment it can be reasonably suggested that the water may have been needed for other purposes. Even to prove such a suggestion is not essential; the utmost that can be fairly required is to show, as has now been done, that the suggestion is possible and reasonable. Indeed, the mere possibility of the water being needed for other purposes than dipping, is enough to show that dipping is not a necessary inference; and, if the inference from the facts is not necessary, it is ruined as an argument.

To bring the matter to a point. John might have chosen a place well provided with water, *without dipping his hearers; therefore, the fact that he chose such a place, can never prove that he dipped them.*

3. THE BAPTISM OF THE EUNUCH is another of the facts adduced in favour of immersion. The words are found in Act viii. 38-39—"He commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." The fact "that they went down both *into* the water," and "came up *out of* the water," is supposed to favour immersion, and is often quoted as if it settled the question.

It will here be noticed that whatever force is in this argument, is found in the use of the prepositions *into* and *out of*. Were it not for them, any other place where baptism is named would be as good an argument for immersion as this. But surely no proof so plausible at sight ever proved so unsatisfactory on examination.

First. It is stated "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch." But this surely cannot mean that Philip was dipped. He had been a deacon, and was now a preacher, and it will scarcely be said that on this occasion he dipped himself to keep the Eunuch company. The Anabaptists hold that the Eunuch alone was dipped, and that Philip acted as dipper on the occasion. But if the language does not prove that Philip was dipped, it is hard to see how it can prove that the Eunuch was dipped, for the words from which the argument is drawn are equally applicable to both—"They went down both into the water," and "they came up out of the water." One cannot help asking, if Philip could go "down into the water" and "come up out of the water," without being dipped, why could not the Eunuch do the same?

Secondly. The language used does not necessarily imply that either of them was dipped. The horse every time he drinks at the pond goes *down into* the water, and comes *up out* of the water, but it does not follow from this that he was *under* the water. Had both stood in the pool, and the Eunuch been baptized by the pouring of water on his face or head, the language of the passage would be a correct description of the fact. We lay it down as a self-evident truth, that no argument from circumstances is ever decisive, if any other explanation of the circumstances is proved possible.

To bring this argument to a point. The Eunuch, as well as Philip, could go *down into* the water and come *up out of* the water, *without being dipped*; therefore, *the fact that he went down into it, and came up out of it, does not prove that he was dipped.*

4. BURIED IN BAPTISM. This argument is founded on Rom. vi. 3-7, and Col. ii. 12. Let both passages, and the context, be examined in the Scriptures, for they are too lengthy to be here transcribed. The words thought to be decisive on the Mode of Baptism are these—"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also

should walk in newness of life." The passage in Colossians is of similar import—"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." It is argued from these passages, that in baptism there must be the symbol of a burial, and that as dipping in the water is the only form that resembles burial, therefore the only true mode of baptism is to dip.

If this be the true interpretation of the passages, Paul must have been one of the weakest reasoners who ever tried his hand at logic. For what does it make him say? Turn to that passage in Romans, and you will find that the Apostle is there dealing with the charge, which has been in all ages brought against the doctrines of grace, that they encourage men to live in sin. The Anabaptist would have us believe that Paul meets this charge by alleging that we are dipped in baptism, and because we have been dipped, we are *symbolically* one with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and are, of course, *figuratively* freed from sin. The force of the reasoning thus ascribed to the Apostle may be estimated by a parallel. A charge of ungodliness is brought against the character of, let us say, John Robinson. John meets it after this fashion. He asserts that on last Sabbath he sat at the Lord's table in some place of worship: he states that his partaking of the elements was symbolic of his feeding by faith on the Redeemer: and he alleges farther, that *through the ordinance* he is symbolically one with Christ in His death, and that being thus *symbolically* dead, he is freed from sin and from every other charge. Poor logic, one would say—not very like the logic of Paul. Honest John would soon find that his moral position was not much improved by his symbolic argument.

To show how erroneous it is to understand the Apostle, in Rom. vi. 3, to speak of the baptism of water, we take an illustration from the case of Simon Magus. The sorcerer was baptized by Philip, no doubt, after the most orthodox form (Acts viii. 13). Apply now to the case of Simon the facts stated in Romans vi. According to it, he must have been "*baptized into Jesus Christ—baptized into His death—*

buried with Christ by baptism." He must have "*walked in newness of life*;" he must have had his old man "*crucified with Christ*;" and, being dead in Christ, he must have been "freed from sin." Now, if any man can have such blessings by water baptism, water baptism must be of more value than even Anabaptists think it. But that Simon, though baptized by Philip, received no such benefits as these "by baptism," is evident from the words afterwards addressed to him by Peter—"I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." A rather odd sort of address to a man who, if the Anabaptist interpretation of Romans vi. is correct, must have been baptized into Jesus Christ, and who, of course, being dead and buried with Christ by baptism, must have been freed from sin!

Light makes darkness disappear: a plain statement of the truth is the best way to scatter clouds of error. The error in the Anabaptist interpretation of Rom. vi. 3, and Col. ii. 12, arises from understanding the word *baptism* to apply to the external ordinance as administered by man, whereas it refers to the gift of the Spirit as dispensed by God. To the illustration of the passages we bring 1 Cor. xii. 13—"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free." Apart from the bestowment of miraculous powers, there is a baptism of the Spirit that introduces a sinner into the body of Christ. This baptism produces faith in the human soul: faith unites us to Jesus, and makes us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Eph. v. 30). Being thus members of His own body, we are one with Christ our head, in His death, burial, resurrection, and glory. Though a man were dipped in Jordan itself, it never can in reality be said of him, till he is baptized with the Spirit, that he is crucified with Christ, or buried with Christ, or risen with Christ, or that he sits in heavenly places with Christ. Here, then, is the Apostle's reasoning, in our view; grace, he maintains, does not encourage men to live in sin; for grace brings its subjects into union with Christ, and, baptized by the Holy Ghost, they are brought into such close relationship to Jesus, that being members of His body, they suffer on His cross, die in His

death, lie in His grave, and share in His glory. All who partake of such a baptism, are, of course, dead with Christ, and freed from sin. This is sound reasoning; but to say that the doctrines of grace do not countenance a life of sin, merely because a man in his baptism with water received *the symbol* of such blessings, is to make the Apostle speak, if not nonsense, at least nothing to the purpose.

As the passages in question refer to the *effects* that follow the baptism of the Spirit, it is obvious that no argument can be drawn from them as to the *manner* in which the baptism of water is to be administered. Men are buried with Christ, not by being dipped in water by a poor frail mortal like themselves, but by the Holy Ghost baptizing their souls, and producing in them that faith which connects the soul with Christ, both in His death and in His life. No wonder that many of the more ignorant Anabaptists think that to be dipped is to be saved, when they are taught that by water baptism they are buried with Christ and rise with Him to newness of life. Can they, under such teaching, be very much blamed, if they believe that a soul dead and risen with Christ is in no danger, and if they think that, as dipping secures this, dipping is salvation? But our doctrine—namely, that where the baptism of the Spirit is union with Christ, pardon, holiness, and heaven follow after—is a doctrine in obvious harmony with all Divine revelation.

5. THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCH. There can be no doubt that in the age immediately after the Apostles, as we learn from the Greek Fathers, immersion was the ordinary way of administering baptism. But much importance cannot be attached to this by any who consider how early errors in doctrine, government, and worship sprang up in the primitive Church. Even when the Apostles were alive, the mystery of iniquity was at work: forms and ceremonies, having no foundation in Scripture, rapidly multiplied, and many errors in worship and doctrine were in full bloom in the second century. That immersion was practised by the Christians of that time is no more than can be said for the sign of the cross, and anointing with oil, in connexion with the baptismal ordinance. It is dangerous to plead the prac-

tice of the primitive Church for anything which has no foundation in the Scripture. Church history is not the rule of a Christian's faith. We care little that immersion has a footing in antiquity, so long as it has no footing in the Bible.

Here, then, is the utmost that can be established about dipping. To dip is one of the two meanings of *baptizo* in classical Greek, and Christians in the second century, after the death of the Apostles, are known to have baptized by immersion. Whatever countenance these two facts give to dipping, dipping enjoys. But it detracts seriously from the weight of these facts that neither of them are Scriptural arguments. It cannot be proved that the word retains its primary meaning in Scripture, nor can it be proved that the practice of the Church in the second century was the practice of the Apostles of Christ. The proofs alleged from Scripture turn out, on examination, to be no proofs whatsoever. In the whole Word of God there is no command to dip. There is no example in Scripture of any one whatever, of whom it can be proved that he was dipped in baptism. All the evidence adduced from Scripture, and we never heard of any other than that already stated, is only a variety of circumstances which, at the first blush, favour dipping, but which, when carefully examined, say nothing definite on the subject. Yet this is the sort of evidence on which the Anabaptist rests his notion about dipping, and finds his assertion that every other Christian is unbaptized. The weaker his argument, the bolder his tone; and, this being so, little wonder that he is loud and bold indeed.



III. *The Scriptural Mode of Baptism.*

The candid inquirer, anxious to know the truth, may now be supposed to put the question, If dipping cannot be proved by the Bible, is there any other mode of baptism which can plead the authority of God? This question can be answered to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced man. There is quite enough in the New Testament to show all that was required in order to constitute a valid baptism.

Be it remembered, that the exact point now to be determined is, *How* is a baptism to be effected? Is it by a person being put *into* the element, or is it by the element being put *upon* the person? The *manner* in which the person and the element *come in contact* is the exact point to be ascertained. Now, the Word of God determines this nice question for us.

The key to the understanding of the whole subject is found in Matt. iii. 11—"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST, AND WITH FIRE." This prophecy of John, as all agree, found its fulfilment at Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them, and they were endowed with the gift of tongues and other miraculous powers. Premising this, and anxious that the reader should keep before his mind the verse now quoted, let us turn, in the first place, to—

Acts i. 8.—Here we find the Lord Jesus speaking to His disciples immediately before His ascension. He commands them (verse 4) not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father: that promise, in ver. 5, He explains to be the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and He goes on to say (verse 8), "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is COME UPON you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa," &c. Mark that word, *come upon*; for it expresses mode. The way in which the Apostles were baptized was by the Holy Ghost *coming upon* them. The result of the Spirit coming upon the Apostles, was their baptism with the Spirit. We conclude from this, that when the water of the ordinance comes upon people, it results in their baptism with water.

Acts ii. 3.—The day of Pentecost had now fully come; the disciples were together in one place: suddenly a sound from heaven as of a rushing wind filled the house where they were sitting, and, as we read in verse 3, "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it SAT UPON each of them." The tongue of fire *sitting on* each of them is almost universally regarded as the fulfilment of the promise—"He shall baptize you with fire." There is a mixed

metaphor, no doubt, in speaking of fire *sitting*, as the Evangelist does; but that does not prevent the word from showing very conclusively the *mode* of the baptism. The Apostles were not dipped into the fire, but the fire *sat upon* them. They were not put into the element, the element was put upon them. Consequently, when water is put *upon* the person, there is a Scriptural baptism, but no immersion. The term used indicates clearly the mode of administration. If the fire sitting on the disciples constituted the baptism of fire, then the water of the ordinance resting on the person constitutes the baptism of water.

Acts ii. 17.—That same day Peter addressed the multitude, and explained to them the extraordinary event which had so recently occurred. This, he says, was what might have been expected. One of the ancient prophets had long since said that in the latter days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh; and the present baptism, he would have them understand, is only the first fulfilment of that ancient promise—“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will **POUR OUT** of my Spirit upon all flesh.” Mark that word—*pour out*; for it determines mode. Now, I ask, if the pouring out of the Spirit is the true mode of administering the baptism of the Spirit, is not the pouring out of water in the ordinance the mode of administering the baptism of water?

Acts ii. 33.—Towards the conclusion of the same discourse Peter again speaks of the Spirit, the promise of whom the Lord Jesus had received from the Father, and he says it was this Holy Ghost whom an exalted Saviour had bestowed—“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath **SHED FORTH** this, which ye now see and hear.” Mark the word—*shed forth*; for it expresses mode, and embodies the fulfilment of the promise, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” I ask, again, when the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost results in the baptism of the Holy Ghost, why should not the shedding forth of water in the ordinance result in the baptism of water?

Acts xi. 15, 16.—Peter, on returning to Jerusalem, after admitting the first Gentile believers to the Church, is called **to account** for his conduct in associating with the heathen,

and, in self-defence, he rehearses the whole affair which had lately taken place in Cesarea. He recounted the matter from the beginning, and at verse 15 he says, "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost *FELL ON* them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." In the Holy Ghost falling on them, Peter saw the fulfilment of the promise, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." That word, *fell*, is worth your notice; for it expresses mode. We ask the candid reader to answer this question—If the Holy Ghost's falling on persons is the true mode of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, why should not the water of the ordinance, falling upon persons, be the true mode of the baptism of water?

This Pentecostal Baptism, administered by God Himself, will be for ever conclusive as to the Scriptural mode of baptism. The most ignorant reader, if gifted with the very slightest power of thought, cannot fail to see that the Apostles were not dipped into the Spirit, nor plunged into the Spirit, but that the Spirit was shed forth, poured out, fell on them, came upon them, sat upon them, and, *in consequence of this, they are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost.* These different terms show the mode in which the element and they came, so to speak, into contact, and that is the very point which we desire to know.

It is in vain to attempt to escape the force of this argument by saying that this baptism was spiritual. We answer, it was a real and true baptism; the element, indeed, was spiritual, but that does not prevent us from seeing *the mode in which the person and the element came into contact with each other*, and that is all which at present we care for seeing. It has been said that this was a figurative baptism; but, even admitting it to be so, the figurative always rests on the basis of the literal, and the language used is only justified by the fact that the literal baptism is produced by water *coming upon* the person. Had it been otherwise, how easy would it have been to have filled the house with the Spirit before the entrance of the Apostles, to thrust them into the house,

and then to speak of them as dipped in the Spirit or plunged in the Spirit. That He did otherwise, will for ever be proof that baptism is possible without immersion.

This is surely enough for any one who wishes to know the mind of God on the mode. The reader can now judge for himself what is the Scriptural form. Let it be observed, that in our positive argument we rest nothing on mere circumstances, which might, perhaps, be capable of another explanation. We are content to allow God, in His own Word, to speak for Himself. We consult the oracle which never fails, believing that the best interpreter of Scripture is the Scripture itself. By five distinct words, we are informed of the Scriptural mode of baptism. When the Holy Ghost is shed forth, is poured out, falls, comes upon, or rests on persons, they are baptized with the Holy Ghost: we conclude, therefore, when the water of the ordinance is shed forth, poured out, falls, comes upon, or rests on persons, that they are baptized with water. The baptism, then, which the Scripture recognizes, is the *putting of water on the person*, not the putting of the person into the water. Nothing can be proved from the Bible if this is not proved, that A MAN IS SCRIPTURALLY BAPTIZED WHEN THE BAPTIZING ELEMENT IS PUT UPON HIM.

IV. Conclusion.

In our second chapter, it has been shown that there is, in reality, no proof from Scripture in favour of immersion. To the reader, as well as to ourselves, this, we hope, is now evident. But let us suppose for a moment that in this we are mistaken—that there is some latent force in the evidence that has failed to reach us, and that immersion is in proof as a Scriptural mode. What would follow logically from this?

Not that dipping is the only mode of Scriptural administration, but that we have two modes, one by putting the person into the water, the other by putting water upon the person. In this case, dipping would stand on a level with what we have shown to be the Scriptural mode. To prove

that baptism by immersion is right, never can prove that baptism by pouring is wrong; even as to show that the attitude of standing in prayer is right, never can prove that the attitude of kneeling is wrong. Men might be left to choose between two modes of baptism, as they are left to choose between two postures in prayer, both of which are sanctioned by Scripture example. So that a man might admit all the arguments advanced by the Anabaptist from the Scripture in favour of his practice, and yet refuse to admit that dipping is essential to the ordinance; because, notwithstanding such an admission, it would be still in proof that the disciples were baptized in a different form.

Now, this is the position that perhaps the great majority of professing Christians have actually adopted on this question. They see, as they think, evidence in the Bible for two modes, dipping and pouring: they believe that it is a matter of very small importance which of these is adopted, because, in either case, there is the washing of water; and where there is the washing of water, there is all, so far as mode is concerned, which is essential to the ordinance. This is the view of the matter taken by the most influential of the Protestant Churches. The Church of England gives to the officiating clergyman the choice of dipping or pouring, according to circumstances. The Presbyterian Church does not condemn dipping; what it says upon the mode is that "dipping is not *necessary*, but baptism is rightly administered by sprinkling." Both Churches leave an option to the minister to adopt the one or the other mode according to circumstances: they carefully refrain from saying that either the one mode or the other is *essential* to the ordinance. Hosts of eminent writers take the same view of the question.

Now, of these well-known facts Anabaptist writers are constantly taking an unfair advantage. They find many theologians who admit that dipping was an ancient and a Scriptural mode of baptism, just as they believe pouring to have been an ancient and a Scriptural mode. In these circumstances, one of the most common devices of Anabaptist writers (I mean, of course, the smaller fry—such men as Carson were above it), is to extract sentences from the works

of Pædobaptist writers, in which they speak favourably of immersion, taking good care to conceal, at the same time, that these writers believed that baptism by pouring was no less Scriptural and valid. They seek to convey the impression to the unwary and ignorant, by quoting half-truths from great authors, that the whole Christian world is on their side, only that from some unworthy motives they did not act up to their convictions. Whereas, the truth is, that perhaps not a single man of all those whose opinions are thus quoted, held the Anabaptist doctrine that dipping is *essential* to baptism. They held, most of them, that the two modes are equally Scriptural, equally right, and equally valid; but the Anabaptist, instead of telling this, quotes *only* what they say in favour of dipping, leaves what they say for the other mode unquoted, and thus misrepresents their testimony. No writer of eminence in any Church holds, or I believe ever held, the doctrine that *a man undipped is a man unbaptized*—the Anabaptist, of course, always excepted. He alone says, no dip—no baptism.

None except the grossly ignorant can ever be swayed by mere human opinion in matters of religion. Men who have not carefully examined a matter are always the most ready to make admissions; and if they have attained eminence in any other way, these admissions, made often after a very slight examination of the case, are at all times liable to be flung in our faces. But, apart from the reasons on which they rest, human opinion goes for little with men who make the Scripture alone the rule of their faith. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." We have no wish but to know the mind of God upon the matter, as expressed in His own Word. The conclusion to which *we* arrive on the whole subject is, that if we look only at the design of baptism to furnish a symbol of sanctification, either dipping or sprinkling will do, because, in either case, there is the washing of water. If the rule of faith were the classics and the Fathers, dipping would have more abundant proofs in its favour than sprinkling; but if we are to be guided by the Scripture alone, the only mode of baptism which *can be proved by it* is that of PUTTING WATER UPON THE PERSON.



THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

WE now proceed to a department of the doctrine which all allow is of much more importance than that which has hitherto been under discussion. We mean an inquiry into the *Subjects of Baptism*. Christians, it is to be lamented, are not entirely at one even on the question, *Who should be baptized?* Here, too, human infirmity fails, we think, to apprehend the full testimony of God, and Anabaptism commits the error of denying one-half of the truth. It shall be our business to set before the reader the essential facts of the case, to bring out clearly the points of agreement and of difference, and to exhibit the evidence so as to enable each man to judge for himself what the Scripture really testifies on the matter.

I. *The Question in Debate.*

In all sound reasoning, the first thing is to know accurately the point in debate. In no controversy was it ever more needed than in this. The Anabaptists invariably represent that believer baptism is their doctrine, and that infant baptism is ours. This representation is both unfair and unfounded; but, with them, it is a favourite mode of stating the question, because it enables them to parade a great number of texts to prove that believers were baptized in apostolic times—a fact which, of course, nobody denies—and then to call upon us to produce an equal array in proof that infants were baptized. The design, of course, is to convey to the unsuspecting reader the impression that all the Scripture is on their side, and no Scripture against them. In vain any man attempts to set them right—they seem to

have no desire to be set right. The next day they will inform the public that they hold the baptism of believers, and that we hold the baptism of infants. Such a representation is a proof of weakness; any cause that is strong and true never wilfully misstates the case.

What is the real state of the matter? Plainly this, that the baptism of believers, *in the circumstances described in the Scriptures*, is as much the doctrine of any other Protestant Church as it is the doctrine of the Anabaptists, the only difference between them and us, on the subjects of baptism, being simply, *whether the ordinance ought to be administered to the infant children of believers.*

The baptism of believers is, we repeat, common ground to us and them. Every instance recorded in Scripture of faith being required in order to baptism, is a case where we would require faith in order to baptism. The 3000 at Pentecost (Acts ii. 41), Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix. 18), and the disciples at Ephesus (Acts xix. 5), were, up to that period, Jews, who, on entering into the Christian Church, were baptized, after making a profession of faith, but who would not have received the ordinance from us on any other terms. The same condition, previous to baptism, we would have demanded from the Eunuch (Acts viii. 35), from Cornelius and his friends (Acts x. 47), and from Lydia (Acts xvi. 15)—for they were Jewish proselytes asking admission into the Christian Church. Simon Magus and his fellow-townsmen (Acts viii. 12, 13) believed and were baptized; but these Samaritans—the adherents of a false and corrupt worship—would not by us have been taken into the Church without baptism, nor baptized without faith. The jailer of Philippi (Acts xvi. 33, 34), and the Corinthians (Acts xviii. 8, and I Cor. i. 13–17) were previously heathens, who had to believe before being baptized, and on no other terms would such persons be admitted to membership in any Evangelical Church. These are all the cases recorded in the Scriptures where faith preceded baptism; and any one of all is enough to prove that any person, *in the same circumstances as they were*, must believe in order to be baptized. But mark what these circumstances were:—every one of them, up to

The period of his baptism, was either a Jew or a Jewish proselyte, a Samaritan or a heathen ; every one of them was an adult, coming into the Christian Church from the world beyond it ; every one of them was the case of a person whose parents had not been Christians ; and none of them had ever received Christian baptism before. There is no Protestant Church in Christendom that would not require faith from all of them prior to baptism ; because, from the day that the Christian Church was founded, they were all, without exception, out of the visible Church, and our doctrine has always been, that "baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, *till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him*" (Shorter Catechism, Quest. 95). The baptism of believers, in such circumstances as the Scripture prescribes, being the doctrine of our Church, patent on the face of its standards for ages, the Anabaptists have no more right to quote these Scripture examples against us than we have to quote these examples against them ; and, however it may prop up a sect, it can never serve the interests of truth to represent, as they invariably do, that the baptism of believers is exclusively their doctrine, and not ours.

Let there be no mistake on this subject with the reader. We maintain that, when any one, born *beyond the membership* of the Christian Church, whether a Pagan, a Samaritan, or a Jew, would seek admission within its pale, he cannot be baptized till he believes. On this part of the subject both sides are agreed. We only differ from the Anabaptist when he argues that, because an adult needs faith before baptism, therefore an infant needs faith before baptism. His logic does not seem to us convincing, when he maintains, because a profession of faith was needed from Jews, Samaritans, and Pagans on their entrance into the Church, therefore the infants of those in church-membership already need to make a profession of faith, or be excluded from baptism for want of it. If faith before baptism is required from adults in certain circumstances, it seems to us poor reasoning to argue, from that fact, that faith before baptism is required from infants in totally different circumstances. A foreigner, who means to settle in our islands, requires to take out letters of

naturalization before he can claim the rights of a British subject; but it does not, therefore, follow that one who is British-born requires to do the same. Anabaptists think that the same qualification is required for the child of a church member, previous to its baptism, as is required from an unbaptized adult on his admission to the Church, and exclude infants from baptism for want of this qualification. We, on the contrary, think that, to refuse a child baptism, on the ground that it does not possess a qualification which the Scripture does not require from a child, is both unscriptural and unjust.

What, then, is the precise point in dispute? Not the baptism of believers, because the baptism of believers, in all such circumstances as those specified in Scripture, is common ground. The point on which we differ is simply this, *What is to be done with the infant children of Church members?* We say, "Recognise their Church membership by baptism." "No," says the Anabaptist, "leave them unbaptized till they understand the Gospel, and make a profession of faith for themselves." The difference regards children only; and every argument that does not bear on this particular point is out of place on either side.

II. *Anabaptist Objections.*

That infant baptism is the practice of all branches of the Christian Church, with one solitary exception, is a well-known fact. That it has been the practice of the Church of God for eighteen centuries is also beyond dispute. When one sect, therefore, ventures to differ in opinion from all other Christian Churches, it should have very strong reasons to support it. Let us consider the objections which they advance against the administration of the ordinance to the children of believers, and then let all men judge whether they are sound and conclusive.

I. The first of these objections is founded on the *baptism of Christ*—Matt. iii. 13-17. The fact that Christ was not baptized in childhood, but only when he entered on his

ministry, some thirty years afterwards, is considered by many of the more ignorant class a strong proof against infant baptism.

My answer to this will be short. At the time of Christ's birth, the ordinance of baptism did not exist in the Church of God. Circumcision was then the initiatory rite, and Christ was circumcised (Luke ii. 21). Thirty years afterwards, John was sent to baptize, and so soon as the opportunity presented itself, Christ submitted to the rite. But although His own disciples baptized during the Saviour's lifetime (John iv. 1, 2), yet it was not till the Lord had risen from the dead that Christian baptism was instituted (Matt. xxviii. 19). The mere fact, therefore, that the Lord Jesus did not receive, in infancy, an ordinance that did not exist till after His death and resurrection, is surely no argument against infant baptism. One might as well argue against the circumcision of infants, on the ground that Abraham was not circumcised till he was a hundred years of age.

2. Again, it is said, that *an infant cannot understand baptism*, and eloquent pictures are sometimes drawn of the wrong inflicted on the poor unconscious babe which receives an ordinance of which it knows nothing, and is made a party to a solemn transaction without any consent of its own.

It is admitted, readily, that a child at baptism does not understand the nature of the ordinance of which it is the subject, but that is no reason why it should not derive benefit thereby. It does not know the texture of the clothes that cover it, and yet these clothes keep it warm. It does not understand the nature of its mother's milk, and yet that milk sustains its life. The children that were brought to Jesus that He might touch them (Mark x. 13-16), did not understand the ceremony that was gone through on that occasion, and yet we cannot but believe that Christ's blessing did them good. An Anabaptist might have rebuked those mothers, and said to them, "Take your children home, what is the good of it? What can they know about Christ's blessing?" But Jesus would have shown him, what he did show the ignorant disciples, that with such conduct He "was *much displeased*." A Divine purpose may be served, and good

may be done, by the administration of baptism to a child, while, at the same time, the child does not understand the ordinance. If our Anabaptist friends had seen a Jew, with knife in hand, ready to perform on an infant of eight days old the rite of circumcision, they would have attempted to dissuade him from his bloody work in some such way as this—“How can this poor babe know anything of a covenant made so many years ago? . Why administer to it an ordinance that it does not understand? Why make it a party to such a solemn transaction without any consent of its own?” The Jew could scarcely hide his contempt for one so ignorant of the Law and the Prophets, as he would reply—“Beautiful reasoning, indeed, thou Gentile unbeliever! but with me it does not weigh one feather against the appointment of God.” Now, we say the same. The baptized infant may be ignorant of the ordinance, but that does not, with us, weigh one feather against the appointment of God. Dr. Carson, an Anabaptist writer, says, “I would baptize Satan himself, without the smallest scruple, had I a Divine warrant.”* Possessing, as we do, a Divine warrant for baptizing the children of believers, we hesitate still less to administer the ordinance to an unconscious babe.

3. Again, we are told there is no command or example in the Scriptures for infant baptism.

This would be a fair and honest objection if advanced by persons who themselves renounce every practice that cannot produce from Scripture express example or command. The parties, however, that state this objection, know very well that in the Word of God there is no command or example for Sabbath Schools, or for admitting females to the Lord's Supper. Both these things, however, are practised by themselves, doubtless for reasons they consider sufficient; and yet they come to ask for our practice a kind of warrant that they are not able to produce for their own. Now, is this fair? Is it reasonable for them to demand for infant baptism evidence of a different kind from that which satisfies them in regard to other practices they acknowledge to be scriptural?

I have often been amused to hear some zealous Ana-

* *Baptism*, p. 196.

baptist, breast-high for doing nothing for which express command or example is not forthcoming, undertake to prove one of the practices of his denomination—namely, that females have a right to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Command he has none. Example he has none. But instantly he enters on the field of inference in some such way as this : he finds it written that "the disciples came together to break bread," and because women are disciples as well as men," he *infers* their right to the communion from the fact of their discipleship. He discovers that females were in the Corinthian Church, to which Paul delivered the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and thus, from the fact of their membership, he *infers* their right to communion. He ascertains that they came together with the males into one place when the ordinance was about to be observed, and from the fact of their assembling at the same time with the other members, he *infers* the propriety of admitting them to the table. Or, because "a man" is commanded to examine himself prior to partaking of the feast, he *infers* that in the term *man* the female is also included. Thus his argument for female communion is inference throughout; but the moment that he turns to speak of infant baptism, perhaps the very same man will scout inference altogether. Nothing but express precept or example will do now. The very same kind of proof that satisfies him in the one case, will not, in the other, satisfy him at all. Now, let any honest man say whether this is reasonable. The admission of females to the Supper is at least as important as the admission of infants to baptism, and what right has any one to demand for the latter evidence of a different nature from that which is held sufficient in regard to the former? We undertake to maintain the right of infants to baptism with stronger arguments than it is possible to produce for the admission of females to the Lord's Supper. Our arguments may, in a large degree, be inferential, but it is only an ignorant and shallow reasoner who would object to them on that ground. All that any man has a right to ask is, that our inferences be clear, and sound, and conclusive. On this point most men will agree with an Anabaptist writer already mentioned, who

says, "I do not object to inference; on the contrary, I receive what is made out by inference, just as I receive the most direct statement. But an inference is not a guess, or conjecture, or probability, or conceit drawn at random; it must be the necessary result of the principle from which it is deduced." After such a statement, from such a quarter, it would be almost heresy in an Anabaptist to object to inference, more particularly as we engage that any inference we draw shall be the necessary result of the principle from which it is deduced.

4. The most common objection to the baptism of children is, that faith is necessary to baptism, and that as infants cannot believe, they should not be baptized.

The Anabaptist uses no argument that he thinks so powerful and convincing as this. Yet it is the merest sophism, that ought to impose on no man who knows what reasoning is. Such an argument, if sound, would overturn what all admit to be truths. Try it, for example, on the subject of the salvation of infants, and see the result to which it leads. Thus, faith is necessary to salvation; but infants cannot believe, therefore, infants cannot be saved. All candid men must admit that faith is as necessary to salvation as it is to baptism, and if the want of faith shuts an infant out of the Church, the want of faith also shuts an infant out of heaven. It follows, then, that infants dying in infancy are lost. But the possibility of infant salvation is an admitted truth; an argument, therefore, which proves against an admitted truth cannot be a sound argument.

That the reader may see and judge for himself how identical the argument is, I append both cases, so that they may be under his eye at the same time:—

No. 1.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark xvi. 16).

But the infant cannot believe;
Therefore,
The infant is not to be baptized.

No. 2.

He that believeth not shall be damned (Mark xvi. 16).

But the infant cannot believe;
Therefore,
The infant shall be damned.

Scriptural Baptism—Its Subjects.

We pronounce the conclusion in both instances to be false—utterly and awfully false. But the Anabaptist maintains that the conclusion in No. 1 is true, and that the conclusion in No. 2 alone is false. It lies on him, therefore, to show, if he can, how the *same argument* can conduct to a true conclusion in the one case, and a false conclusion in the other. Surely there is no room for evasion here; the major premise is, in both cases, a sentence from the Word of God; the minor premise in the one is identical with that in the other, and, moreover, is admitted to be true by all parties; and the conclusion is drawn exactly in the same way in both cases. If the argument, therefore, is valid against infant baptism, it is equally valid against infant salvation; but if it be a false argument against infant salvation, it is equally false against infant baptism.

The fallacy here arises simply from this cause, that there is more in the conclusion than there is in the premises. When the Scripture speaks of faith as necessary to baptism and to salvation, it speaks with reference to adults only, for such, alone, are capable of faith. The argument takes for granted that an infant needs to possess, for baptism and for salvation, the same qualification as an adult does—that is, must have faith, of which it is known to be incapable. And it concludes that, for want of faith, the infant is entitled neither to baptism nor salvation. But what the Anabaptist requires to prove is, *that God demands the same qualification from an infant as He does from an adult.* Without this, his objection to the baptism of an infant, on the ground that it cannot believe, is not worth a groat. We maintain that faith is not required from an infant, either in order to its baptism or to its salvation. A just God will not demand from a child a qualification of which it is, from the very nature of the case, incapable. If an adult does not believe, he cannot be baptized; but it is very different with an infant. If an adult does not believe, he cannot be saved; but it is very different with an infant. Faith is not required in an infant in order to salvation, and faith is not required in an infant in order to baptism. An infant enjoys the privilege of being saved without faith, and of being baptized without faith.

It were well that those, who speak of the want of faith as being a sufficient cause for excluding children from baptism, would attend to the following statement of the late Dr. Carson—"That necessity of faith which the Scriptures apply to *adults, and to adults only*, theologians have applied to infants, without warrant, as if God was bound to proceed towards them as He does towards adults."* That sentence is well worthy of remark. He there condemns, as a grand mistake in theologians, the habit of supposing that, because faith is necessary to the salvation of an adult, it must also be necessary to the salvation of an infant. In this we quite agree with him; but we cannot help asking, at the same time, is not this the very mistake that he and his party make in regard to infant baptism? Do they not argue, one and all, that, because faith is necessary to the baptism of an adult, therefore it is necessary to the baptism of an infant? Do they not exclude infants from baptism on the ground that they do not *believe*—on the ground that they do not possess a qualification which the Word of God requires from adults only? May we not apply his own words to himself—"That necessity of faith which the Scriptures apply to adults, and to adults only, [Anabaptist] theologians have applied to infants, *without warrant*, as if God was bound to proceed towards them as he does towards adults." The Anabaptist, therefore, is condemned from his own mouth. He acts "without warrant" when he demands faith from an infant in order to baptism; or, what is the same thing, excludes it from baptism for want of faith.

These are the strongest objections that we remember to have heard alleged against infant baptism. Let every unprejudiced man decide whether there is one of them that has not been fully and fairly answered. This being the case, we are now to inquire what amount of evidence Scripture furnishes in its favour. It will not require very much to turn the beam, for, as we have seen, there is literally nothing in the opposite scale.

* *Baptism*, p. 215.

III. *Evidence for Infant Baptism.*

The great principle that forms the basis on which the practice of baptizing infants rests, is the near and intimate relationship which, by the very constitution of our nature, must ever exist between parent and child. The child partakes of the very nature of the parent; the life of the one is continued in the other, and the interests of both are the same. In a variety of cases, by the very necessity of nature, the act of the parent is justly regarded as the act of the child. If the parent rise to citizenship in the land of his adoption, his children are considered as having done the same; if the parent renounce one religion and attach himself to another, the child is counted with him. In all such cases, the parent represents his child, and acts on his behalf; and the child, moreover, must be regarded as approving his parent's conduct, until he is in a position to act for himself. This principle, there can be no doubt, has its foundation both in nature and in reason, and, in many cases, it is acted on in the ordinary transactions of life.

Better still—the principle that the parent represents the child, is one that has the repeated sanction and approval of God Himself. Over and over again, children have been parties to those covenants into which it has pleased the Lord to enter with men. In the covenant of works, Adam acted for all his posterity; in the covenant of grace, Christ undertook for all His seed. In both alike, children have their place; over them, as well as others, “sin hath reigned unto death,” and over them, too, “grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.” The covenant with Noah embraced the patriarch and his seed (Gen. ix. 9). The covenant with Abraham did the same (Gen. xvii. 10). The covenant made between God and Israel on the plains of Moab, and which was only a renewal of the covenant at Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 7, 8), included the little ones as well as the full grown men and women, they all promising to keep God's covenant, and God promising to be their God (Deut. xxix. 9-13). This latter passage is of great importance, inasmuch as it exhibits

parents entering into covenant for themselves and their children, and promising obedience. Here we have the clearest sanction to the principle that the parent represents the child while the child is unable to act on its own behalf: that when the parent takes God to be his God, and promises obedience to His commandments, he does for his child what he does for himself; and that till such times as the child becomes a responsible agent, and disowns the act of his parents, "he is not only bound by the parent's act, but is to be regarded and treated as though he had done in his own person what his parent did in his name."* Having thus seen that the great principle which lies at the foundation of infant baptism, takes origin in the constitution of our nature, and has been repeatedly recognized in God's covenant dealings with men, I remark:—

1. That the infant children of God's people were acknowledged by a religious ordinance to be within the covenant, and in visible membership with the Church of God, for nearly two thousand years before the coming of Christ. The ordinance that recognized this membership was circumcision, which, as all know, was administered to infant children (Gen. xvii. 10; xxi. 4). Circumcision introduced the subject of it to religious privileges; it brought him within a covenant which contained the promise of spiritual blessings (Gen. xvii. 7); it enabled him to eat the passover (Exod. xii. 48), to enter the sanctuary (Ezek. xliv. 9), and to be reckoned with God's professing people: the want of circumcision, on the other hand, was enough to make an Israelite an excommunicated man, "cut off from his people" for breaking the covenant of God (Gen. xvii. 14). It was not administered to the infants of Israel as a mark of carnal descent, to which they were entitled as being the seed of Abraham, as may be seen from these two facts; *first*, that the Ishmaelites, Edomites, and Midianites were the lineal descendants of Abraham, but had no right to the seal of God's covenant on their flesh; and, *second*, that the stranger within their gates, in whose veins the blood of Abraham

* Article in *Princeton Review*, from which the substance of the two preceding paragraphs is taken.

never flowed, might partake in it, and thus profess faith and obedience towards the God of Israel. But infants were circumcised as being the children of God's professing people : and circumcision was the religious rite by which their interest in the covenant and membership in the Church were recognised. It was the outward mark that distinguished God's professing people from the heathen, and it gave the person who received it a right to participate in some of the holiest rites of the ancient religion. That it continued to be the practice to acknowledge, by this ordinance, the membership of infants in the visible Church, down to the advent of Christ, is evident from the fact that, even when the sun of the Old Dispensation was setting, John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus himself were circumcised (Luke i. 59 ; ii. 21). We hold it proved, therefore, that *the infants of God's professing people, in common with their parents, were recognised members of the Church for nearly 2000 years.*

3. The Church, into whose membership infants were introduced by an express appointment of God, is the same in all essential particulars with the Church that now exists. The Church, as it is in the sight of God, is the collective company of all true saints : the Church, as it is in the sight of men, is the collective company of all who profess the true religion, and their children. Since the day that the first promise of redemption was given, this, which we call the Church visible, runs through all ages. Dispensations, ordinances, and forms change ; but the Church in its membership does not change—it always is the collective company of God's professing people and their children. True religion, in its essence, is always the same—faith in God, and practice corresponding to that faith. The religion of a saint in Jewish times was, in all essential particulars, that of a true Christian now. All who attended to the ordinances, and thereby gave expression to their love and obedience to God, were counted God's people then as now : the true Israel then, as now, were those who repented, found mercy, and lived by faith (Heb. xi.) : the plan of salvation was the same : the code of morals, as summed up in the ten commandments, was the same : the experience of a servant of God, as may be seen

in the Psalms, was the same as at present : and the promises and truths that cheered and instructed them as they passed on upon their way to the promised land, are still supplying green pastures to the flock of Christ as they pass through the wilderness.

At the death and resurrection of Christ, His Church in the world assumed a new form and organization, suited to the altered circumstances in which it was in future to be placed. The civil code that was peculiar to the Jews as a nation, ceased to bind, now that the people of God were no longer to be limited to a nation. The ceremonial law was abolished, for it had found its fulfilment in Jesus. Victims were to be laid on the altar no more, now that the Great Sacrifice was offered. The high priest had no longer need to enter within the veil, now that the Great High Priest had passed into the heavens. Even circumcision itself waxes old and disappears : henceforth, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Such a change passed on the Church as passes on the tree, when it sheds the leaves of autumn, old and sere, and the leaves of spring, young and fresh, return : or as passes on the soldier, when he divests himself of his uniform and dresses in plain clothes. The man is the same, though the clothes be different : the tree is the same, though the leaves be different : the Church is the same, though the forms be different. At the commencement of the Christian dispensation, the kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof (Matt. xxi. 43). Some of the Jewish branches were then broken off, and a wild Gentile olive-tree was grafted in, and thus made to partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree (Rom. xi. 17). The Gentile sheep were brought into the fold, where the Jewish believers already were (John x. 16). Christ, our peace, made Jew and Gentile one, and broke down the middle wall of partition between them (Eph. ii. 14). But, through all these changes, the Church, in all its essential parts, remained unchanged : it was the same kingdom that was taken from the Jew that was given to the Gentiles : it was the same olive-tree from which the Jewish

branches were broken off that had the Gentiles grafted in: it was the same fold, only with other of Christ's sheep brought into it: it was the same chamber, only enlarged by the removal of a partition wall. *The Church, therefore, into whose membership infants were at the beginning introduced, is essentially the same Church that exists in the world still.*

3. The Church membership of infants has never been set aside. It was, as we have seen, the original appointment of God himself. It existed 430 years before the law of Moses was given. It was the established practice of the Church of God for two thousand years. Something very clear and explicit is required to nullify an appointment of God, so universally observed and so long established. Among the changes of the new economy, has the Church membership of infants been annulled and set aside? We search, with anxiety, the inspired records of the New Testament Church, to know whether children are to be excluded, while their believing parents are taken in—whether infants occupy a worse ecclesiastical position now than they did under the Old Dispensation. Believers are to be taken in, but there is no direction that we can find to shut their children out. We ask the Lord Jesus for guidance on this matter, and He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not" (Mark x. 14): we question Paul on this subject, and he tells us that even where one parent is a believer, the "children are holy" (1 Cor. vii. 14): we seek instruction from John, and we find him writing unto little children, as members of the Christian Church (1 John ii. 13). We can find, then, no authority in the New Testament for believing that the ancient practice of admitting children to membership in the Church of God has ever been set aside. Not only so, but no Anabaptist has ever yet appeared who could lay his finger on any passage of God's word, where, by command, example, or fair inference, the great principle of infant Church membership was ever reversed. A law never repealed, is, of course, always in force. We conclude, therefore, that *the membership of infants is, at this moment, the standing law of the Church of God.* A Divine law cannot be set aside by anything short of Divine authority, and

Divine authority for depriving the children of a right which they enjoyed for two thousand years, is something that, up to the present time, has never yet been brought forward.

To produce from the New Testament any express statute re-affirming the membership of infants in the Church, is what we are not bound to do. Except the Old Testament is a dead letter—a bundle of waste paper—there is no need for it. We have shown the Divine law that established the right of infants to Church membership. The Anabaptists say, that at Christ's coming, this was abrogated. Let them show it if they can. "We insist that they shall produce Scriptural proof of God's having annulled the constitution under which we assert our right. Till they do this, our cause is invincible. He once granted to His Church the right for which we contend; and nothing but His own act can take it away. We want to see the act of abrogation; we must see it in the New Testament; for there it is; if it is at all. Point it out, and we have done. Till then, we shall rejoice in the consolation of calling upon God as our God, and the God of our seed."* Or, to use the words of a writer of their own, "A Divine law must continue obligatory until it is repealed by Divine authority." Now, let the Anabaptist produce the authority by which the Divine law of infant Church membership is repealed. But this he knows he can never do.

4. Infants being thus entitled by the Divine law to Church membership, the only question that remains, is as to the way in which that membership is to be acknowledged—is it to be with baptism or without it? To receive them as members *without* baptism, is to say, in other words, that baptism is useless, and to strike at its very existence as an ordinance in the Church of God: to receive them *with* baptism, is to say that infants are to be baptized. This is strengthened by the consideration that the children of God's people are recognised, under the Old Dispensation, as members of the Church, by the same ordinance as their parents; it was the same rite that was administered to the old man of a hundred years, and to the infant only eight days old. In the absence of any intimation to the reverse, we conclude that

the children of God's people are to be received to membership, under the New Dispensation, by the same ordinance as their parents are. Now, we find by the Scriptures, that believing adults are to be received by baptism: the infants of believers, we conclude, are to be received by baptism also; because it has been the law from the beginning, that the ordinance which admits the parent, also admits the child. We cannot resist the conclusion that *it is the appointment of God that the infants of believers are to be admitted to Church membership by Baptism.*

Infant baptism, being thus the appointment of God, to attend to it is a duty—to neglect it is a sin. The believer who objects to have his children baptized, is quarrelling with a Divine ordinance, omitting to claim the spiritual promises and privileges of God's covenant, practically renouncing, in the name of his children, all interest in that covenant. It is a piece of greater cruelty and folly than was perpetrated by Esau; Esau parted with his own birthright, but the man who repudiates infant baptism, parts with his children's; Esau sold his birthright for something, but this man deliberately flings away a privilege, and receives nothing in return. Thus, the Anabaptist despises his children's birthright.



IV. *The Apostolic Commission.*

The commission given by Christ to the Apostles after the resurrection, is sometimes confidently quoted as if it nullified the argument which we have now advanced. That commission is in these words—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Here we see, *first*, the *parties* among whom the Apostles were to labour, "all nations"—not the Jews only, but the Gentiles: *second*, the *work* to be done—"teach," or, as it is more correctly translated, "disciple" all nations: *third*, the *means* by which the work of discipling was to be done—baptizing them and teaching them. But how this

proves that the children of believers are not to be baptized, it is very difficult to discover. If to "make disciples of all nations" meant to make disciples of adults only, and if infants were wholly incapable of baptism and instruction, the commission, it is clear, would not contemplate their case: but, if we find elsewhere that the infants of God's people are entitled to the privilege of Church membership, the commission must be understood in accordance therewith. The Word of God cannot contradict itself. Narrow it down to authorize merely the baptism of believing adults—an interpretation of which it is scarcely capable—still a command to baptize believing adults does not necessarily exclude infants, and that infants are entitled to Church membership we learn from other passages of the Word of God.

For the intelligent reader it would not be necessary to notice the argument that because the word *teach*, or *make disciples* of, occurs in the passage *before* the word *baptizing*, that, therefore, in each case it is necessary to *disciple* the individual before he is baptized. But, with the ignorant, this is considered an irresistible argument, and, on this account, it is well to notice it. Now, it is quite true, that if an apostle, or any other missionary, go forth to evangelize a heathen nation, he must teach the truth before he can find any to believe it, and he must, of course, have believers before it is possible for him to baptize the children of believers. So that if the Apostles were commanded to make disciples before they baptized, this would be no difficulty in the way of the baptism of infants; the missionary has always to teach before he baptizes—he has to convert the parent before he can baptize the child. But any man who chooses to examine, may see that this is not necessarily taught in the passage. When the Lord commands the Apostles to *make disciples of all nations*, he shows them, in general, *the work* that they are to do: when he adds, *baptizing* and *teaching* them, He specifies in detail the way in which the work of making disciples is to be done—"baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded." This is an unfortunate passage for our Anaba-

tist friends: henceforth it should cease to be a favourite with them, for the way of discipling all nations prescribed in the commission, even interpreted in their own way, is to baptize first and instruct afterwards.

There would be some plausibility in the Anabaptist interpretation, if the commission read "make disciples of all nations *and* baptize them:" but it is a very different form of expression to say, "make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching." One parallel to it is found in 1 Tim. ii. 8—"I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." Here the Apostle first states the duty—*prayer*; and then the way in which the duty is to be done—*lifting up holy hands*; but if this verse were explained as our friends would have us to do the apostolic commission, we would say that Paul's meaning is, that men are to pray first, and to lift up holy hands afterwards. A gentleman, let us say, has two men-servants, a Presbyterian and an Anabaptist, and he says to them some fine morning, "Go and coat the avenue with gravel, drawing it from the river, and spreading it on the path." After the master has retired within, the two men stand outside debating the meaning of his orders. "I think," says the Presbyterian, "that the master's meaning is plain; the work which he wishes us to do is to gravel the avenue, and the way in which we are to do it is to draw the gravel from the river, and spread it on the path." "Not at all," says the other, "that is more of your Presbyterian nonsense. Did you not observe that the master spoke of coating the avenue before he spoke of drawing the gravel from the river? What he wants us to do is, first to put a coating of gravel on the path, and then to draw it from the river afterwards: and mark you, my good friend, I have my minister's authority for this, because this is exactly the way in which he interprets the commission that was given to the Apostles of the Lord."

An Anabaptist writer, commenting on the commission, indulges in a military illustration. He supposes Government to order the colonel of a regiment to fill up a certain company with men six feet high; the recruiting sergeants, in

compliance with the orders, go forth in search of men, but the recruits, when they are measured, turn out to be five feet eight instead of six feet. He thinks, very properly, that this would be unsoldierly conduct, inasmuch as "the instructions that mentioned six feet high as the standard, forbid all under that measure to be enlisted." In like manner, he thinks that a command to baptize believers necessarily excludes infants from baptism.*

But this author must take his readers to be very innocent, if he expects them to regard such an illustration as a fair representation of the case. It utterly fails to exhibit our argument—nay, it does not attempt to do it. We venture to give an illustration to supply his lack of service, and then we will comment upon it, *almost in his own words*. Let us suppose that in one of the Queen's regiments it has been the practice, for very many years, to enlist full-grown men of six feet high, and also lads of ten years of age, that from their childhood they may be trained in the art of war; and suppose an order came down from the War-Office which alters the form of enlisting, and, without mentioning boys, directs that, in future, all men enlisted into that regiment need only be five feet eight inches. Suppose, farther, that the recruiting sergeants would interpret the instructions in this way, that because the recruits in future may be only five feet eight, and the order does not mention boys, therefore, no more boys are to be enlisted into the regiment; and suppose they act on this principle, and that, when they return from their recruiting tour, they have no lads with them, and that, in consequence of such conduct, her Majesty's service is, for a length of time, deprived of the service of those who can be trained as men of war from their youth. The colonel is in high displeasure, and calls the sergeants to account for their unsoldierly conduct, when out steps one of the most flippant of them all, instructed by Dr. Carson, who stands forward in his defence—"Stop a little, Colonel, I will prove to you that our conduct was perfectly right. You know that in this gallant regiment the practice did long exist of enlisting men of six feet high, and boys of ten years of age; now, when

* *Carson on Baptism*, p. 172.

the recent orders came from the War-Office, changing the mode of enlistment, and lowering the standard of the men from six feet to five feet eight, these orders never spoke of boys at all; I thought, therefore, that boys were not to be admitted into the regiment any more. Nay, more, I can assure you, good Colonel, we have the sanction of the Anabaptist Churches for this way of reasoning, though they profess the strictest adherence to the Scriptures. Dr. Carson explains his Lord's commission to baptize in the very way in which we have explained our commission to enlist. If he treats the commission of the Lord of heaven in that way, it surely cannot be blameable in us to treat your commission in a similar way. We thought that, when the men in the regiment might, in future, be five feet eight, that lads, as formerly, would not be required." "You thought, sir," says the Colonel, "you reasoned! Who authorised you to reason on the subject? Your business was to obey. Your orders were so plain that they could not be mistaken. You knew it was always the peculiar practice of this regiment, from the first day of its existence, to enlist lads as well as men into the Queen's service. You knew that recent orders lowered the standard height of the men only, and did not interfere with the established practice in regard to boys. You had no right to reason, then, that the order spoke of boys, when it only spoke of men. Your conduct is unsoldierly, and would subvert all discipline. Drop your swords, take up your muskets, and return to the ranks." And does the Anabaptist expect a "well done, good and faithful servant," for conduct that would disgrace a recruiting sergeant? If Paul had ever seen such a man, and heard him reason, he might not have addressed him altogether in the style wherein he spoke to Elymas the sorcerer, but he certainly would have said—*Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*



V. *Additional Considerations.*

The argument by which we prove the right of children to baptism is strictly analogous to that by which we prove the

perpetual obligation of the Lord's Day. The Anabaptist is compelled on that subject to adopt the same line of argument that we do on baptism. He goes back to the Old Testament Dispensation to find there the principle of one day's rest after six days' work, in the same way as we go back to find the principle of the church membership of infants. He finds that the principle of resting one day out of seven existed long before the law of Moses, though it was incorporated therein; just as we find the principle of infant church membership existing from the days of Abraham, though it was incorporated in the law given at Sinai 430 years after Abraham (Gal. iii. 17). He finds that the law of the Sabbath was acknowledged by God's people down till the coming of Christ; and we find that the law of the church membership of infants was acknowledged by them down till the same period. Finding nothing in the New Testament to set aside the principle of one day's rest after six days' work, he considers that the law of the Sabbath is still in force; exactly as we, finding nothing in the New Testament to set aside the principle of infant church membership, conclude that that portion of the Divine law is in full force still. He discovers, however, that the New Testament introduces a modification, in consequence of which he considers himself warranted in devoting the first day of the week instead of the last to purposes of rest and worship: and we discover, too, that the New Testament introduces a modification, in consequence of which we consider ourselves warranted in recognising the church membership of infants by the ordinance of baptism, instead of by the ordinance of circumcision. He maintains that the change from the seventh to the first day of the week does not interfere with the great unrepealed principle of one day's rest after six days' work, and he concludes, therefore, that the law of the Sabbath is a perpetual ordinance: and we maintain that the change of the initiatory rite from circumcision to baptism does not interfere with the great unrepealed principle of infant membership; and we conclude, therefore, that infant membership in the Church of God is a perpetual ordinance. He insists that if men do not discover sufficient authority in the New Testament for the

change of day, this does not free them from the law of the Sabbath, but binds them to keep it on the seventh day instead of the first: and we insist that if men do not see sufficient authority in the New Testament for infant baptism, this does not free them from the law of infant church membership, but binds them to acknowledge that membership by circumcising instead of baptizing them. In short, the mode of proof is the same exactly in the one case as it is in the other. So much is this the case, that that section of Anabaptists known as Plymouth Brethren, with admirable consistency, deny the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath as well as the church membership of infants. The ordinary Anabaptist shrinks from this; he holds by the Sabbath, and rejects infant baptism; and, strange to tell, the very same argument which, on the one subject, he thinks ought to convince everybody, he asserts, on the other subject, should convince nobody. The same proof that, in the one case, pleases him well, on the other does not please him at all. Prejudice, it is to be feared, warps the judgment of these good people even more than they themselves suspect.

The argument for infant baptism, as detailed in a previous chapter, is confirmed by various considerations, which also go to show how the practice harmonizes completely with other facts and statements of the Word of God.

1. *The love and respect the Lord Jesus often showed for children.* "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom" (Isa. xl. 11). "And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 2, 3). "And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark x. 16). "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John xxi. 15). These passages show, at the very least, that the Lord Jesus entertains no dislike to little children. But would it not be fair to conclude that He cherished

no fondness for them, if, without assigning a reason, He has deprived them of a precious privilege that once was theirs, and excluded them from His Church? Tho Good Shepherd carries the lambs in His bosom, but the Anabaptist would have us believe that He takes the sheep into the fold and shuts out the lambs.

2. *To receive a little child in Christ's name is a duty which Christ Himself recommends.* "And Jesus took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me" (Mark ix. 36, 37). To receive any one, is to treat him as becomes the station and position that he fills. Christ came to His own, and His own received Him not (John i. 11), that is, did not treat Him with the respect due to His rank and dignity. The expression, "in my name," is explained (Mark ix. 41) to mean "because ye belong to Christ." To receive a little child in Christ's name is to treat it as belonging to Christ. But which Church treats little children as belonging to Christ—the Church that receives them to its bosom, or the Church that excludes them, as being unfit for membership?

3. *There is a distinction made between the children of believers and those of unbelievers.* "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. vii. 14). Whatever be the meaning attached to the terms here used, they make a distinction between the children of the believer and those of the unbeliever; even where one parent is a believer, the Apostle tells us the children are holy, otherwise they would be unclean. Now, this distinction Anabaptism fails to recognise, for, by withholding baptism, it treats the children of God's saints as it treats the children of God's enemies, pronouncing both, so far as admission to the Church is concerned, to be equally unclean.

But the text teaches much more than this. The word *holiness* has two senses in Scripture, the one being purity of moral character, the other consecration to God. In the former sense, the Divine Being, the unfallen angels, and the

saints, are said to be *holy*, that is, free from the impurity of sin. In the other, the Sabbath, the high priests' garments, the vessels of the tabernacle, the temple, and the land in which the Israelites lived, are said to be holy; that is, consecrated to God. In this sense the whole nation of Israel is said to be holy (Lev. xx. 26; Ezra ix. 2), because they were chosen from the other nations, and separated to the service of God. In the same sense the child of Jewish parents was reckoned holy. It was, of course, a sinner—by nature a child of wrath, as other children are—but being the child of God's people, it was counted as God's; it received in the flesh the seal of His covenant; it was thus marked as His property; it was henceforth reckoned holy, that is, devoted to God. Now, this style of speech Paul transfers from the Jewish to the Christian Church; and he teaches that if one parent only be a believer, the children are not to be counted with the world, but with the Church, not with the kingdom of Satan, but with the kingdom of Christ, not among God's enemies, but among His professing people. If, in such circumstances, the child of Jewish parents had a right to be received by the initiatory rite of the Old Dispensation, the child of Christian parents has a right to be received by the initiatory rite of the New—in other words, to be baptized. Should it live to reach that period of life when it becomes able to judge and act for itself, and of course ceases to be represented by its parents, its own conduct is from that time to determine the relation in which it is to stand to the Church of God.

The value of the passage in Corinthians is not so much that it states anything positive on the subject of baptism, as that it takes for granted the principle that the character of the parent is to determine the way in which we are to regard his child under the New as well as under the Old Dispensation. As the child of a Jew is to be treated as a Jew, so now the child of a Christian is to be treated as a Christian: if one parent is a believer, the children, in virtue of their connexion with that parent, are to be reckoned holy. A believer is not his own—his body, his soul, his property, all are God's, and are consecrated to Him. But the above

passage is valuable, for it shows that his children also are God's: and when the Christian parent presents his child in baptism, that is his acknowledgment of God's claim. Infant baptism furnishes the believer with a suitable opportunity of saying, in the most expressive form, that his children belong to God; but Anabaptism denies the parent such an opportunity, puts the child of a saint on a level with the child of an infidel, and refuses to recognise it as holy; that is, the possession and property of God.

The assertion that the words *holy* and *unclean* are to be understood here in the sense of *legitimate* and *illegitimate*, and that the meaning of the passage is, that the children of a believing parent are not bastards! is too absurd to be seriously considered. The word translated *holy*, though occurring, as Dr. Wilson has shown, above seven hundred times in the Septuagint, Apocrypha, and New Testament, never means *legitimate* in any instance whatsoever. To say, therefore, that it has such a meaning, only proves the desperate expedients to which prejudice has recourse in order to evade an argument.

4. *The child of the believer is to be presented publicly to the Lord.* In Luke ii. 22, 23, we read of the child Jesus being brought by his parents to present him to the Lord. The reason assigned for this is that he was *holy*—not in the sense of being free from sin, though that was true, but in the sense of being devoted to God. As a first-born son, he was the peculiar property of God, and therefore to be presented to Him; for “every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.” Now, under the Gospel, we learn from 1 Cor. vii. 14, that the child of every Christian parent, whether a first-born child or not, is in the same position. “Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” If the first-born in Israel was to be presented to God because it was holy, the children of the believer are to be presented publicly to Him for the same reason. They, too, are “holy”—the property of God. Now, the baptism of a child affords the parent a suitable time for this public presentation to God. We present our children to God in their baptism. But were we Anabaptists, we would not be

allowed by our system any public opportunity of doing this. Being contrary to Anabaptist principles, it is, in reality, never done by them.

5. *Christ Himself asserts the Church membership of infants* (Matt. xix. 14). "Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." If the kingdom of heaven in this passage is understood to mean the state of glory, it only strengthens our argument; for if children may enter the Church above, they are surely fit to enter the Church below; the greater privilege includes the less. But the phrase is generally understood to signify the Gospel Church, and the Saviour here states, as a reason why children should be permitted to approach Him, that such as they belong to the membership of that Church. Since, therefore, children form a portion of the membership of the Church, they are entitled to the rights of membership, and one of these rights is baptism.

Attempts have been made to weaken the force of this argument, by the allegation that the passage means that children are to come to Christ because that adults, who resemble children in character, belong to the membership of this Church. This exposition is open, however, to two very grave objections. *First*, it puts a sentiment akin to nonsense into the lips of Him from whom no folly ever fell. How absurd for the Lord Jesus to give, as a reason for bringing children to Him, that men, teachable and humble as children, belong to His Church. The same reason would have served equally well for bringing doves to Christ for His blessing; for the irrational creatures are capable of receiving the Divine blessing (Gen. i. 22), and Christ's disciples are to be harmless as doves. Imagine Christ to say, Suffer these *doves* to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven! Yet that sentiment is exactly parallel to that which the Anabaptist exposition attributes to Him in whom all the treasures of wisdom are hid. *Second*, this interpretation assigns to the word *such* a meaning that it never has, as if it denoted the resemblance that exists between objects of a different class, whereas it denotes the resemblance that exists between objects of the same class. It never denotes the

resemblance that exists, for instance, between a man and a child, but that which exists between some men and other men, between some children and other children. Thus, in Acts xxii. 22, "Away with such a fellow from the earth," simply means, away with any fellow of *the same kind as this fellow* from the earth. Other examples are found in John iv. 23; Heb. vii. 26, and many other places; *such* always referring to persons or objects of *the same kind* as that immediately in hand. Interpreting the passage in question as we do others of a similar kind, we understand Christ to say that children must be allowed to come to Him, for children like those before Him belong to His Church on earth. Christ did not baptize these children, for Christian baptism was not then instituted; but when He affirms that of such is the kingdom of heaven, He informs us that children form a portion of the membership of His Church; and, this being the case, they have a right to the privileges of membership; and to this, baptism is only the first step.

6. *The Apostles themselves baptized households.* The family of Lydia was baptized (Acts xvi. 15), although there is no evidence, not the slightest, to show that any of her household believed except herself. Two other cases we have, in the jailer (Acts xvi. 33), and Stephanas (1 Cor. i. 16), whose households were baptized, although it is very uncertain, as every man competent to examine the Greek original of Acts xvi. 34, and 1 Cor. xvi. 15, knows very well, whether these households believed or not. It is remarkable, however, that of the eleven distinct cases of baptism recorded in Scripture, three of these are family baptisms, proving that such was a common practice in apostolic times. Now, on the principle that we adopt, that the younger portion of the household are entitled to church membership in virtue of their relationship to a believing parent, these family baptisms might be expected: but on Anabaptist principles, such events must border on the miraculous. To keep these three cases from proving infant baptism, he requires the reader of Scripture to believe that there were no children in any of these three households—that every member of these three families was capable of faith—and that, at the very time the

head of each house believed, all the other persons in the house believed also. Now, is this likely? On the contrary, if there was one infant in any of those three houses, infant baptism receives an additional proof. Let the reader judge which view is the most natural, the most probable, and most in accordance with the general tenor of the Word of God. The fact that it was a common practice for the Apostles to baptize households, though in itself not conclusive, is certainly a strong consideration in favour of baptizing children, since children form an important feature of most households. Attempts have been made to show that the apostolic commission would exclude the baptism of infants, even if they were found in those households. But that, as we have seen, is a mistake; the commission commands the Apostles to baptize the *nations*, in which, of course, infants are included. To use it for such a purpose, would be to make the law a comment on the practice, whereas it is the practice of the Apostles that determines the sense in which they understood the law: and to be obliged to fall back on the commission in order to exclude infants from these households, only betrays a consciousness on the part of those who adopt this expedient, that without the help of the commission they cannot themselves resist the belief that the baptism of households involves the baptism of infants.

7. *Children are found in the membership of Churches planted by the Apostles.* It is a well-known fact, that the Epistles of Paul were mostly all addressed to Churches—to those companies of Christians that were collected, by the preaching of the Word, out of the Gentile and Jewish population. The Epistle to the Ephesians is addressed “to the saints which are in Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph. i. 1); and yet it is certain that there were children in that very Church of Ephesus, for Paul addresses them specially, as a component part of the Church—“Children, obey your parents, in the Lord: for this is right” (Eph. vi. 1). The Epistle to the Colossians is addressed “to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse” (Col. i. 1, 2); and in that very Epistle, children are addressed among the members of the Church—“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord” (Col.

iii. 20). Such passages show clearly that children were in the Churches that were planted by the Apostles. This being the case, the question naturally arises, *How did they get in?* Was it by baptism, or without it? If it was without baptism, then baptism has ceased to be the initiatory rite of the Christian Church, and has lost all its significance; if they were admitted by baptism, there remains no further question about the duty of baptizing the children of believers. Any man, whose prejudices do not blind him utterly, must see that the Churches planted by the Apostles were not constituted on the Anabaptist plan. The apostolic Churches had children in them, for the Apostles, in writing to the Churches, addressed themselves to children. The Anabaptist Churches have no children in their membership, but plume themselves on the circumstance that they keep children out: therefore, it is clear the Anabaptist Churches are not apostolic Churches.*

Every man must see how very much these considerations go to corroborate the main argument for infant baptism. The right of the children of believers to church membership underlies the statements that meet us so often in the New Testament Scriptures, and the admission of this fact casts light on passages that otherwise would be dark and difficult. In that fact we have evidence of how the Good Shepherd loves the young, and gathers them into the fold; but the Anabaptist would have us believe that the Good Shepherd admits the sheep, and shuts out the lambs. When we baptize an infant, we receive a little child in Christ's name; but, although that is a duty recommended in the Scriptures (Mark ix. 37), the Anabaptist laughs it to scorn. We distinguish between the children of believers and the children of unbelievers, by baptizing the holy, and refusing baptism to the unclean; but Anabaptism makes no such distinction, for it treats as unclean those to whom the Spirit of God bears witness that they are holy, and will not allow them to be publicly presented to the Lord. Christ, Himself, asserts of children that "of such is the kingdom of heaven," and we,

* So keenly is the force of this argument felt, that some Anabaptist Churches, we understand, are now admitting to membership young persons at a very early age. Some are taken in so early as thirteen, and some at nine. This is a move in the right direction. There will soon be but a year or two between us.

by baptism, recognise them as such : but Anabaptism refuses to acknowledge them, and attempts to explain away the law of the kingdom by which their membership is secured. It was a common practice of the Apostles to baptize households: but, except to lame one of our arguments, the baptism of a whole family at the same time would not be heard of in the history of an Anabaptist mission twice in a generation. Children were in the apostolic Churches: but to admit a child under nine years of age would be reckoned, by an Anabaptist Church, heresy and pollution. Let the candid reader decide for himself which system, theirs or ours, is most accordant with the letter and spirit of the Word of God.



VI. *No proof on the Anabaptist side.*

We have now done with our direct statement. The weightiest objections advanced against the practice of administering baptism to the children of believers have been examined and found wanting. Like the ghosts of which we read in fable, they look formidable and frightful at a distance, but they vanish as we draw near. We have stated candidly the evidence that induces us to recognise by baptism the church membership of infants, and that evidence has been strengthened by various considerations drawn from the Word of God. We have kept nothing back, but, so far as our space permits, we have stated, for the satisfaction of the reader, the reasons that induce us to admit by baptism the infant children of believers.

Now, let the Anabaptists be equally honest and explicit. Their plan of treating the children of believers is to keep them unbaptized till they reach such a mature age as is necessary to enable them to understand the Gospel, and profess faith for themselves. This is their plan. Let them state the evidence from the Word of God that warrants them to act in this way. We have plainly stated the evidence for our practice : let them state the evidence for theirs. Let them state one text that bids them to keep the child of a believer unbaptized. *Let them produce one solitary example*

from the Scriptures, of one who was the child of Christian parents at his birth, but who did not receive baptism till he made a personal profession of his faith. If the Scripture be so much on their side as they pretend, they should have no difficulty here. The New Testament history, from Pentecost till the death of the Apostle John, covers the space of sixty or seventy years, surely time enough to allow the infants of many believing Christian parents to grow up to manhood, and to enter the Church on their own profession of faith. Let them produce one such case from Scripture if they can. I am willing to rest the whole question on this issue. Let them name the case in Scripture of the child of Christian parents who was treated on their plan and not on ours. Let them show me one clear case of this, and I will never again pour water on an infant. But there is no fear that they will ever try.



VII. *The Parable of the City Park.*

About 500 years ago there was a rich and princely nobleman, whose castle stood in the neighbourhood of a great city. The mayor of the city and this nobleman were on such intimate terms, that even in those days of feudal power the baron was not ashamed to acknowledge the honest burgher as his friend. The nobleman having determined to remove his family to a foreign country, was sad at the prospect of parting with the mayor, and he generously promised to bestow on him, and the city which he represented, some munificent gift that would prove to other ages a lasting memorial of their friendship. There was a beautiful garden in the precincts of the city, planted with all manner of rare plants, and flowers, and fruit trees, which had for generations been the property of the baron's ancestors; and it occurred to him that to allow the mayor and aldermen of the city the use of this garden, in the absence of his own family, would be counted by the corporation a strong expression of personal goodwill. Accordingly, he gave directions that the mayor and aldermen, together with their children, should

have a right of entrance to the garden, and that the same privilege should be enjoyed by their successors.

After the baron's departure, the aldermen entered on possession of the garden, and enjoyed it very much. They were grateful for the honour, and took advantage of the privilege it brought within their reach. It was a pleasant sight—one that their less fortunate fellow-citizens often envied—to see those portly burghers, after a hard day's business in the city, enjoying themselves in that delicious retreat. The parents might be seen sitting in the shade, the children romping on the grass—one climbing the fruit tree to rob it of its clusters, another sailing his paper boat upon the lake, another culling flowers for a nosegay, another—the youngest of all—crowing in the nurse's arms. In this way the aldermen of the city and their children enjoyed that princely pleasure-ground for 250 years.

About the end of that time, the lord of the soil, the lineal descendant of the original donor, himself the scion of a race of nobles, visited the inheritance of his fathers. He found that the state of affairs was very different from what he knew it had been 250 years before. The good mayor and all that generation were many years dead; the city had grown more populous and wealthy. The garden, indeed, was as beautiful as ever, but the aldermen who enjoyed the privilege of entering it, had become degenerate; they had grown insolent and proud; they looked down upon the other citizens as the very dregs of the earth; they had lost that love and attachment to the lord of the soil by which their predecessors had been distinguished 250 years before, and they could no longer be counted among the nobleman's friends. Indeed, they wore the mask of friendship, but they were enemies at heart.

The young baron, having made many fruitless efforts to reform these wicked men, resolved to deprive them of their privilege, and bestow it on others who would prove themselves more worthy. He enlarged the garden, by throwing into it a neighbouring common, and spared no expense in making it more beautiful than ever. It was made so large as to be a park rather than a garden. The gate, that in old

times was so strait that it scarcely would admit a rotund alderman, was now so much widened that a coach and six could drive through it with ease. A new staff of servants was appointed to keep the grounds in order, and to watch the gate, each in his turn; and instructions were given to the gatekeepers in these words—EVERY FRIEND OF MINE MAY ENTER HERE, BUT NO ADMISSION FOR MY ENEMIES. This new regulation made a great change. It abolished the invidious distinction that had hitherto existed between the aldermen and other citizens; it opened the park gate to any citizen whatever, who cherished friendly feelings for the absent peer.

The very first day that the new regulation came in force, there were 3000 citizens who claimed admission as the friends of the noble owner, and who were admitted accordingly. Henceforth that beautiful park was every day crowded with visitors. The citizens, in former times, had always seen the aldermen take their children with them into these grounds, and knew that this was done by the express directions of the original donor; and, as the young baron, on his late visit, left no directions to the contrary, they always took their children with them to the park, no one forbidding them. Two hundred years more passed by, and, during all that time, it is not on record that any gatekeeper refused the right of entrance to the child of any citizen who was known to be a friend of his master.

Some fifty years ago, however, there was a gatekeeper stationed at the park gate who took a very peculiar view of his duty. He thought that the original directions to admit children were not in force now; that the arrangements made by the young baron, when he visited the city two hundred years before, had set the ancient directions aside; that all the gatekeepers who had preceded him for two centuries were acting in the face of their instructions when admitting children. For these reasons, he expressed his determination to admit them no more. This whim called forth considerable remark at the time; but as the man in the main was a good body, and professed nice scruples of conscience in the matter, few citizens gave themselves any concern about him or his

crotchet ; more particularly as all the other gatekeepers, knowing that they served a good master, put a generous interpretation on the baron's orders, and opened their gates freely to the children of his friends. But, for the last fifty years, it has so happened that there is always one of these park-rangers who thinks it his duty to exclude children ; and, although the men are often changed, there is always one of them who strives to put the narrowest constructions possible on the master's order, and when he sees a child coming, runs and locks the gate.

Not long ago, it came to pass that a citizen, distinguished for his ardent attachment to the absent nobleman, obtained a day's leisure, and agreed with his family that he and they would spend the holiday amid the fresh air and leafy bowers of the city park. The youngsters of the house were in great glee, and soon made themselves ready for the day's enjoyment, while nurse, to her great delight, got leave to come along, carrying baby in her arms. At an early hour in the forenoon, the whole household sallied forth, and that day the sunshine seemed more glorious, and everything looked more lovely than was wont, as the whole party gaily tripped along. But, to their dismay, when they reached the park, it was the surly porter who was in charge that day ; and when the official saw the whole household approach, his conscience became doubly tender, and he grasped the key of office with a firmer grasp, and a storm gathered on his brow. A shadow fell on the faces of the children at the sight of him, for, although they could not fathom his motives, yet they knew, by instinct, that that dark man was not their friend. The citizen was no stranger to human nature ; he knew that the mind of the gatekeeper was too deeply steeped in prejudice to be open to conviction, that it furnished him with an exquisite pleasure to represent himself as much more conscientious and faithful than the other gatekeepers, and that custom had now so wedded him to his oddities and whims, that life would, for him, lose half its pleasures, if he should have to renounce them. Nevertheless, he determined to try the effect of a little reasoning upon him ; whereupon the following dialogue ensued between them :—

CITIZEN. Hallo ! gatekeeper, open this gate.

GATEKEEPER. With pleasure, sir, to you and your good lady, for you are both known to be my master's friends ; but these children cannot be admitted.

CIT. How is that ? Have orders reached you lately to exclude the children ?

GAT. No, sir : but the present lord is known to be of the same mind with the baron who visited us 250 years ago, and who left us the orders by which we are now guided.

CIT. Well, I have often read the instructions ; they are printed in large letters over this gate : but I never could see anything in them that necessarily shuts out the children.

GAT. But you certainly must see that the words contain no command to admit them.

CIT. Granting that the order contains no command either to admit or to exclude them, that only proves that the baron did not mean to disturb the established practice in regard to children ; and you know that, for 250 years before his visit, it was the practice to admit them.

GAT. I admit that the children of the aldermen were admitted, with the baron's approval, during the time you name.

CIT. So far well. I ask you now, can you show me anything that annuls the law, changes the practice, and commands you to deny to children the right of entrance ?

GAT. I cannot show you a direct command ; but I can show you what is as good.

CIT. Then, by all means, let us have it.

GAT. Look to that writing on the wall, and see the command there given to the porters—“*Every friend of mine may enter here, but no admission for my enemies.*” Now, sir, you know infants are too young to be capable of friendship, and that being the case, they have no right to be here. Does not this very commission exclude children ?

CIT. I do not see that it does ; the order under which you act confers the privilege that once was enjoyed by the aldermen on every citizen who is the baron's friend ; and, as the aldermen had a right to enter and take their children with them, so any friend of your master has the right now to enter and take his children with him ; and as your orders

do not name children, that shows that it was not the design of the baron to strip them of a privilege which they enjoyed already. So, open the gate, and let the children pass.

GAT. Indeed I will not ; infants are not capable of friendship, and, of course, cannot be admitted as friends.

CIT. True, they cannot be admitted as friends ; but that only shows that the qualification necessary for their parents is not necessary for them ; and when the parents are known to be the master's friends, it is only fair to regard the whole family on the same side, till its members are guilty of some act that proves their want of friendship, and then I have no objection that you deal with them accordingly.

GAT. Say as you please, I will not admit them till they prove their friendship by acts.

CIT. Take into account that the baron enlarged this park, widened this gate, and made provision for a large accession of visitors, showing himself to be kind and generous ; but you interpret his instructions in such a way as to restrict his generosity ; you, in opposition to the spirit of his actions, represent him as repulsive and austere, and, without express authority, you take away from a large and important class in the community a privilege that you admit yourself belonged to them for 250 years. The baron would not be guilty of doing anything so harsh without good reasons ; but he has assigned no reasons, and given no orders to that effect which I am able to discover.

GAT. Sir, it is presumptuous in you to be thus guided by carnal reason : you may be sure I am right, there is no mistake about it. But permit me to ask, how am I to know that it is the will of the present baron to admit children ?

CIT. From the simple fact that he has never counternanded the original orders in regard to children. Those orders hold good till they are revoked by the same authority as enacted them at first.

GAT. You need not think to change me ; I will never admit children at this gate.

CIT. True ; but you must have patience to hear argument on the subject. Is it not known that the present lord has inherited the sentiments of his ancestor who enlarged these

grounds? And is it not on record that he was fond of children, that he sometimes took them up in his arms, and blessed them; and that, on one occasion when his ignorant servants tried to keep children away from him, he administered to his followers a sharp rebuke. Now, when you shut children out of the park, whether is your conduct more in accordance with the spirit of the baron, or with that of his narrow-minded followers?

GAT. Do you suppose that it is my business to answer questions? I have other duties to mind.

CIT. Do you not know the baron once said that children must be allowed to come to him, for this park was intended for such as they?

GAT. Friend, you quite mistake that saying: the true meaning is, that children should be allowed to approach him, because men, in some respects like children, have the right of entrance to his park.

CIT. Well, if that exposition can satisfy you, you yourself are one of those of whom you speak—"Men, in some respects like children."

GAT. Sir, I perceive you sit in the chair of the scorner.

CIT. Pardon me, I can scarcely help it. However, did not the baron once say, He that receiveth one of these children in my name receiveth me? If so; when you reject the children, what are you doing to the master?

GAT. Very true, he did say these words; but he did not bid me to open the park gate to them.

CIT. Did not the master go so far as to make a distinction between the children of his friends and those of his enemies, calling the one class holy, and the other unclean; but you treat both as unclean when you shut all together out of the park.

GAT. Will you not understand language, notwithstanding all I can say to you? When he said that the children of his friends were holy, he only meant that they were not bastards.

CIT. Well, you are a strange interpreter! You stop at nothing to turn aside an argument.

GAT. If you do not like it, I cannot help it. I am not bound to please you with interpretations.

CIT. The gatekeepers, whom the baron appointed at his last visit to the city, must have known his lordship's pleasure better than you, who never saw his face, and they admitted whole families into these grounds. History tells us how a citizen called Lydia, and one called Stephanas, and another—I forget his name—the governor of the city jail, had their whole households admitted. Now, I only ask you to do for my family what these primitive porters did for theirs.

GAT. But you must prove to me that there was a child in those households you have named.

CIT. Your notions of logic seem as strange as your expositions. When you assert that a privilege which belonged to children for 250 years is taken from them, it is your place to prove your statement. If you fail to do this, the privilege continues as a matter of course. A privilege never lost is still ours in possession. Meanwhile, take notice how different your conduct is from that of the first gatekeepers; they admitted whole families, and you do not.

GAT. But my grandfather was a gatekeeper here, and I know it was his opinion that no children were in these households.

CIT. It would be as well for you to go by the baron's orders, and never heed your grandfather.

GAT. Now, that is where you show your ignorance, and malice, and impudence: the opinions of my grandfather and the baron's orders were always in harmony. My grandfather was a great man; he was always right on every subject; and it is only pure spite and malice in you that tempts you to think otherwise.

CIT. Keep your temper, my good friend; your grandfather was, no doubt, a worthy gentleman, and I have no objection that you think him infallible if you please. But have we not good authority for saying that children were in this park in the time of the first gatekeepers; and, as they were in, I presume they must have passed through this gate.

GAT. I have given you sufficient reason for my conduct: it is not necessary that I explain every difficulty that you, and troublesome fellows like you, may suggest.

CIT. Pardon me, good sir, for saying anything that might

imply that any relative of yours ever could be wrong in his opinion. But you know we have a true history that gives an account of transactions that took place here for seventy years after the new arrangements came into force; and I ask you honestly to say, is it on record that the child of any friend of the baron's was ever refused admission at the gate?

GAT. There is no such record.

CIT. Then why do you keep them out?

GAT. Ask me no more of your questions.

CIT. Was there any gatekeeper, for the first 200 years after the first appointment at the time of the baron's visit, who shut out the children?

GAT. No; but I do not see what that proves: they were all wrong, of course.

CIT. Of all the gatekeepers now in office, is there one who excludes the children from the park, or understands his instructions as you do?

GAT. None. But what does that prove? Do you think I care anything for human authority?

CIT. I am sure you do not. You set no value on any human authority except your own, and, if you do not be angry, I will add your grandfather's. But I will follow you no farther at present. Argument is lost on any man with whom his own opinion stands above all argument. I will take home my children at present, and come back some other day, when I am sure to find another at the gate who knows the baron's will better than you. Were it possible for me to cherish hard thoughts of the nobleman you serve, it is the harsh, narrow-minded, bigoted conduct of the servant that would lower the master in my esteem. But far be it from me to measure that large and generous heart of his by the petty representation you give of him. There is a day coming when you will know whether your treatment of the children of his best friends meets with his approbation. Meanwhile, I leave with you a sentence from an old book that you can think of at your leisure—"It is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him through whom they come; it were better that a millstone was hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

The gatekeeper shrunk into his lodge as a snail into its shell, and the citizen, with his children, returned to their home. Now, the gatekeeper was an Anabaptist.

Conclusion.

The reader is now in a position to judge of the claims that Anabaptism has on the reception of Christians. It is occupied only with an ordinance, and that ordinance bearing no greater relation to the Christian system than a penny piece does to a pound sterling. Not only so, but it busies itself mainly about the mode and subjects of that ordinance. The only thing positive which it teaches is, that baptism is to be administered by putting the person into the water, instead of putting water upon the person: the other part of it is a mere negation—namely, that baptism is not to be administered to the infant children of believers. It is on husks like these that its followers are fed. Even if these principles were true, men that love the Lord should pause, and think whether such things are sufficient to justify them in putting one rent more in the Church of the living God, and in maintaining one sect more in a world that has good reason to be sick of sects. The Word of God refuses to sustain the claims of dipping; for, when Christ baptized with the Holy Ghost, He did so by making the Spirit come, fall, and rest upon the person baptized; and when we make the water of the ordinance come, fall, and rest upon the person, we baptize after Christ's example. When Anabaptism refuses to recognize, by baptism, the church membership of infants, it sets itself in opposition to an unrepealed principle of God's Word, to the established practice of two thousand years, to clear statements of the New Testament Scriptures, and to the practice of eighteen Christian centuries; while, at the same time, it can produce no case from the Scripture where the child of Christian parents was treated as they say all children should be treated. Thus it is that Anabaptism comes, with two errors in its hand, to tempt us from the way of truth.

The unpleasant effect that the sight of deformity produces on the mind is very well known. If a painter were to put

upon his canvas the figure of a man, and exhibit some feature of his face in enormous disproportion to any of the others, this one defect would mar the beauty of the painting; and no matter how true it might be to nature in other respects, this alone would destroy the harmony of all. The eye of the spectator would rest upon the deformed feature, and pass over all the other parts of the picture. If the spectator were a mere boor, he might be disposed to admire the genius of the man who produced the caricature; but if he were a man of taste and judgment, a glimpse of that unsightly feature would fill him with disgust. Now, Christianity, as it is in the Old and New Testaments, is the figure that sits to have its likeness taken. Every sect undertakes to give a more correct representation of it to the world than any sister sect. But if, instead of exhibiting the Christian religion in all its relative proportions, and thus leading men to see every doctrine, and practice, and principle of the system in its proper place, whether primary or subordinate, any sect shall adopt some subordinate principle, and put it into the foreground, and make it so important that it overshadows truths vastly more important than itself, it presents to the world a distorted and deformed Christianity. Now this is what Anabaptism does. It takes up baptism and talks about it, till at last men busy themselves about the ordinance more than they do about the great truths which baptism is hiding from their view. It enlarges on the sin of infant baptism, till men at last bring themselves to believe that falsehood, and drunkenness, and dishonesty are small as compared with it. It talks about dipping, till people come at last to think that dipping is religion. Meet an Anabaptist in society, and among the first things you notice in his Christianity are his notions about dipping, and his prejudices against infants, just as in the picture the first thing that takes your attention is the one feature out of all proportion with the others. Deformity can never hide itself; and in a deformed system it is the uncomely part that always shows.

The injurious effects that connexion with a narrow-minded sect tends to produce upon the individual, find, unfortunately, too many illustrations in the world. A mind that, perhaps,

originally was susceptible of cultivation and development, allows itself to be occupied so much about rites, and forms, and petty little things, that, at last, it becomes like the thoughts which harbour in it, little and petty. The better feelings of his heart, that should rise upwards to things above, and that should flow forth to all on earth who bear the image of the Heavenly, become narrowed in their flow, and gradually centre around and fix upon them, only, who cherish a crotchet similar to his own. The conduct that we expect to find in one who lays claim to a purer religion than his fellow, turns out to be no better than what is exemplified by many others who make smaller professions. And after being subject to such an influence for a series of years, a man, who once gave promise of becoming a genial and generous Christian, sinks down into a mere fault-finder—a theological cynic, whose mind is soured against every sect except his own—snarling at everything, and pleased with nothing. Such must be the effects produced on the individual, by connexion, for any length of time, with a denomination which presents any feature of Christianity in an exaggerated form to the world. It is a more serious misfortune than most men know, to belong to a sect which ever wrangles about rites and forms, and delights to split theological hairs. To be in its membership is to imbibe its spirit, and to breathe its unwholesome air. Union with some grand old church, true to the doctrines of salvation, aiming to present the world with the truth in due proportion, and frowning upon follies of every kind, is far more favourable to the growth and development of the spiritual life. The giddy and deluded may leave it to seek elsewhere a religion more congenial to their tastes: but good men will rest in its shadow, and there gather food for their souls, until the world has an end.





